



Spring 2024



Coventry and Warwickshire  
Integrated Care System

# Coventry and Warwickshire Neurodiversity and Autism Stakeholder Newsletter



Neurodiversity and Autism remains a top priority and through working with partner organisations from across Coventry and Warwickshire, we aim to improve the lives of neurodivergent children and adults and help them feel part of their communities.



## Introducing the new accessible, all-age version of the Dimensions of Health and Wellbeing tool

### Breaking news: the new adult and the children and young people's accessible version is now live

The Dimensions of Health and Wellbeing is a free online tool that provides information to support adults, children, and young people in Coventry and Warwickshire. You can rate yourself or another person using the Dimensions, to create a report which can highlight a person's areas of strength and areas where they may benefit from support. It provides trusted information about, local services, national support and resources such as videos, apps and books.

As part of the delivery of Coventry and Warwickshire's All-Age Autism Strategy, the Dimensions Tool has been reviewed to ensure it is accessible and acceptable for neurodivergent people and their families.

The updates for the children and adult Dimensions have been completed in collaboration with neurodivergent people and their families, clinicians,

Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) and partners

### So what has changed?

We have updated the language used to reflect the current preferences of our neurodivergent community, such as using the term 'difference with' in place of 'problems with'. Some of the Dimensions have been removed and some new ones added to ensure more focus is on how providing supportive environments can help neurodivergent people feel safe and secure to be themselves.

It is hoped that the Tool will now be more accessible for everyone in terms of its simplified language and ratings, as well as being easier to navigate and use.

To see a list of the new Dimensions please click on one of the links below.

[Children and Young People's Dimensions List](#)

[Adult Dimensions List](#)

More information and the Dimensions tool itself can be accessed on the [Dimensions website](#).



## Volunteer with the Community Autism Support Service

The Community Autism Support Service is looking for autistic peer mentors to support people accessing social activities and with daily routines. This is a great opportunity to gain volunteering experience and support people in the community.

**Find out more about volunteering with CASS.**

## Volunteer with us!

We're looking  
for autistic  
peer mentors



# Autism Central: Hubs Update



Contact is one of nine not-for-profit organisations that make up [Autism Central](#). The project provides parents and carers of autistic people easy access to autism education, training and support in regional hubs across England.

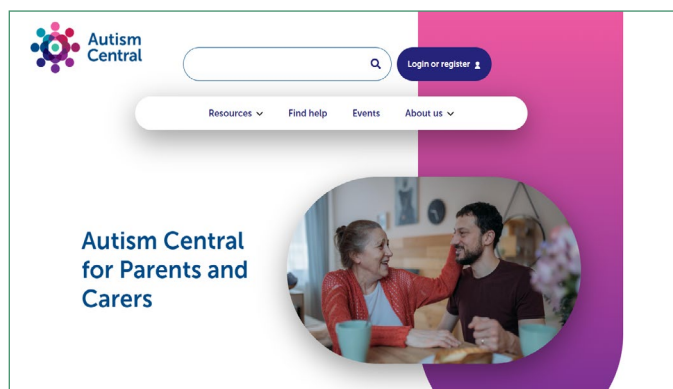
Together with [Ambitious about Autism](#), Contact run the London and Midlands Hubs. Our hubs offer group and one-to-one sessions to help you and other parents and carers find the information and services available in your area. We may also run events such as workshops, drop-in sessions, coffee mornings or virtual meetups.

Alongside our FREE online courses for [The MIDLANDS](#) we offer FREE 30 minute 1-1 calls (or you can opt for an email response) [The Midlands 1-1 calls](#) which parents and carers can access via our website.

We also deliver in-person workshops for parents and carers of autistic people at your coffee mornings, parents' evening, parent support groups or conference events.

Here is a selection of the workshops we can offer:

- Understanding autism for parents and carers OR a whole family version
- Understanding your child's behaviour
- Support for siblings and young carers of autistic children
- Support for parents of children with anxiety
- Wellbeing for parents and carers
- Preparing for meetings
- Transitioning from primary to secondary education



*(This list is not exhaustive, so please do contact us if there is another subject that you would like us to cover)*

Our workshops typically last an hour, and we can deliver at a time that suits you. Some settings and groups will book an in-person workshop for 1.5 hours where there is time before to settle in and chat (such as a coffee morning) before or after the workshop commences or so there is more time for Q&A.

We also offer 1-1 sessions with our Peer Educators (who all have lived experience of autism) and these can be included when running a workshop.

**If you would be interested in a workshop or already run a parent carer group or coffee morning and would like us to attend, please email us:**

**Midlands Hub -**  
[autismhubmidlands@contact.org.uk](mailto:autismhubmidlands@contact.org.uk)

**London Hub -** [autismhublondon@contact.org.uk](mailto:autismhublondon@contact.org.uk)



## Take a look at the free workshops from the Recovery and Wellbeing Academy

**The Recovery and Wellbeing Academy delivers a wide range of courses and one-off sessions in a friendly and informal way. Courses are delivered face to face and via online group sessions, provided by several partner organisations working together to deliver in their specialist subject area.**

All Academy courses and workshops are completely FREE OF CHARGE and open to anyone over the age of 18 living in Coventry and Warwickshire who wants to better manage or understand their mental health and wellbeing. Friends, family, professionals, and carers are encouraged to attend as we strongly believe in learning together to get the most out of the courses and sessions on offer.



Recovery & Wellbeing  
**ACADEMY**



Many of our tutors work in a trauma-informed way and use their own lived and life experience to inform their delivery. Tutors are described as 'open, honest and passionate' and work hard to ensure a safe and comfortable atmosphere to the courses.

No referral is required, just visit the [Recovery and Wellbeing Academy website](#), look at what we have on, and enrol! We talk you through the booking on process in our video [Recovery and wellbeing Academy Promotional video](#) but you're also welcome to get in touch with us via phone on 0300 303 2626 or email [recovery.academy@covwarkpt.nhs.uk](mailto:recovery.academy@covwarkpt.nhs.uk).



# Department for Education officials praise progress to improve SEND services

**Improvements to support for children and young people with SEND in Warwickshire have been highlighted in the latest review from the Department for Education.**

Warwickshire is making good progress to enhance support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), according to the latest review by the Department for Education and NHS England. The collaborative efforts of Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Warwickshire County Council, in conjunction with partners including Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice, were acknowledged for their ongoing commitment to enhancing the SEND system.

The report highlighted continuous progress in the local area, emphasising the adoption of new priorities through the Delivering Better Value Programme and the refresh of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy. Notable updates from the recent review meeting include:

## Area 1: Autism Waiting Times and Support for Families:

- Diagnostic autism assessment waiting times have significantly decreased from 242 weeks to approximately 22 weeks as of September 2023.
- An all-age autism strategy, endorsed by Warwickshire and Coventry ICB, aims to facilitate transitions and promote an all-age approach.
- The Community Autism Support Service (CASS) has received positive feedback, with over 3,000 contacts since April 2023.
- Various initiatives, such as a neurodivergent language video and information e-booklet, have been well-received, and the Dimension tool supports a universal approach.

You can [read the full news release](#) and updates on other areas on the website.



## Creative Thinking from Coventry SEND Support Services

**With growing need and stretched budgets, we wanted to think as creatively as possible about how best to meet the needs of the children and families we serve. We decided that we had to 'think outside the box' and have come up with a number of new ways of working.**

### More support for families

We know that parents are having a tough time at the moment and, despite being a traded service, the Complex Communication Team decided to offer a course for parents outside the traded model. The course is free and is open to all parents of autistic children, even if their school does not buy into our service. The places have been snapped up and the feedback has been really positive. If you would like to find out more, please contact [bsclimbrickwoodcentre@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:bsclimbrickwoodcentre@coventry.gov.uk)

### Support for children not attending school

We have witnessed an increase in children and young people presenting with emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA) or they have become extended non-attenders at school (ENAS). Often these children are neurodivergent and were 'managing' prior to Covid but then that prolonged period of absence

made it so much harder to return to school. In order to better support these young people, we have developed an Extended Non-Attenders pathway and bring together a wide range of professionals to find a way forward.

### Partnership with the Virtual School

Coventry's Virtual School were concerned about the language levels of the children they support and initially commissioned the Complex Communication Team at Coventry SEND Support Service to provide some language assessments for Looked After Children. Specialist teachers visited schools across the city and it soon became clear to the Virtual School that the remit could be wider than initially envisaged. The specialist teachers were also able to give advice for those children with social communication or attachment difficulties, and this meant that the schools could use their traded hours for other children.

There is still a lot of work to be done and we are continually reflecting on how to improve the service we provide for our autistic children and their families.



# Employment opportunities for young people with SEND highlighted in successful first Supported Internships Fair in Warwickshire



**Warwickshire County Council's Supported Internships Fair proved to be a huge success at Compton Verney Art Gallery in November bringing together young individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their parents, caregivers, local businesses, educational institutions, and support services.**

Over 60 attendees from across Warwickshire participated in the fair, showcasing Supported Internships as a valuable opportunity for young people aged 16-24 with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) seeking employment with additional support. The fair not only highlighted the exciting possibilities of Supported Internships but also provided a rare platform for connections, shared experiences, and

the chance to pick up valuable information to guide individuals on their Supported Internship journey.

Supported Internships are work-based study programmes for young people aged 16-24 with an EHCP who want to move into employment but need extra support. As well as giving young people the opportunity to develop the transferrable skills and knowledge needed for a paid job, Supported Internships can also help with improving confidence, self-esteem, and a social life.

"A second event in the north of the county was held on Thursday 14 March, 3pm to 7pm at the Eliot Park Innovation Centre in Nuneaton. This was another opportunity for local businesses, young people and their parents and carers, and professionals, who were unable to attend the first event, to find out more about opportunities for Supported Internships in Warwickshire. An [Access Guide](#) is available to help you know what to expect if attending and you can read more about the event [here](#). Read the [full news release about the first Supported Internships Fair](#).

[Sign up to the SEND Local Offer Facebook page to receive updates and information about future events.](#)

## Also in Coventry

Find out more about Project SEARCH, the transition-to-work education programme for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. in Coventry, and supported internships at Amazon. For more information email [Hannah.Rogers@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Rogers@coventry.gov.uk).

### Supported Internships at Amazon in Coventry

A transition-to-work education programme for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan

#### What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a one-year supported internship programme for students with special educational needs.

Students complete their internship in a real workplace with the support of a job coach and department mentor.

Interns also attend daily classroom sessions that focus on employability and independent living skills. These sessions are delivered onsite at the host business.

The programme helps young people to successfully transition into adult life and work towards full-time, paid employment.

#### A typical day includes:

9:00 to 10:00: Classroom learning focused on employability skills  
10:00 to 15:30: Interns go to work in their placements, supported by a job coach.  
15:30 to 16:00: classroom time to reflect on the day's activities

#### What do I get out of programme?

- Training experiences in a real workplace
- Marketable job skills
- Increased independence, confidence
- Individualised coaching and daily feedback
- Development of soft skills e.g., financial literacy
- Placements will include receiving delivered items into the fulfilment centre, sorting items, packing items to be sent on to other Amazon sites

"I have become more independent since I started Project SEARCH."

#### Who is it for?

Applicants should:

- Have a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Be 18 - 24 years old
- Be a resident of Coventry City Council
- Have the desire and motivation to achieve paid employment
- Be able to travel independently or willing to learn independent travel skills

Contact Hannah Rogers, Coventry City Council

[Hannah.Rogers@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Rogers@coventry.gov.uk)

07534 280 586

Learn More

[dfnprojectsearch.org](http://dfnprojectsearch.org)

## It's OK to Talk about Cancer

### How to contact us

We are a free service.

We are a confidential service. We will only disclose what you tell us, if we feel your safety may be at risk.

You can talk to the Macmillan Information Centre by phone: 02476 153201

Our email is [CancerSupport@geh.nhs.uk](mailto:CancerSupport@geh.nhs.uk)

The Macmillan Cancer Support Line can be called 7 days a week from 8am-8pm: 0800 808 00 00  
If you use a text phone you can ring 18001 0808 808 00 00

The website is [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### WHAT WE DO AND WHO WE ARE

It's okay to talk about Cancer.

Being told you have cancer is scary and it can help to get support.

We can talk about what cancer is and what is important to you.

We can talk about diet and how important it is to stay hydrated. We can sign post you to organisations that can support you.

We can give you booklets that are easy to read and help to answer your questions.

A list of easy read books can be found at [macmillan.org.uk/easyread](http://macmillan.org.uk/easyread)

MacMillan and George Eliot Hospital has produced an easy-read leaflet to promote support available to anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer, or their families or carers.

Visit the [George Eliot Hospital Cancer Information Centre website](#) or visit [www.macmillan.org.uk/easyread](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/easyread) for easy read books.

# Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust celebrates Quality



Please join us in congratulating Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust's Neurodiversity staff at the Trust's annual Quality 'Q' Awards in November. Winners included:



**Clinical Leader of the Year** - Cathy Watt, Head of Nursing, Community Learning Disability and Autism

Additionally, many congratulations go to those from the Adult Neurodevelopmental Service who were shortlisted and include :



**Clinical Leader of the Year** - Sarah Leady, Clinical Lead, Adult Neurodevelopmental Service and NHS England Neurodevelopmental Liaison Project



Integrity

**Integrity Award (Team)** - The Adult Neurodevelopmental Service



**Improvement Champion Award** - Lisa Whitley, Team Lead and Occupational Therapist, Adult Neurodevelopmental Service

The nomination for the Adult Neurodevelopmental Service for the Integrity Award read: *"When I saw the piece on what Integrity means in work, it was like reading a textbook definition of the Adult Neurodevelopmental team. As a service that often works with people who "fall between the cracks", the team goes above and beyond to do the right thing for their client group on a daily basis, to bridge gaps between services, advocate for clients to receive fair and appropriate care and treatment, and to collaborate with others to ensure that the vision the team has is translated into the wider Trust and community. This team lives and breathes their work; the depth of knowledge and commitment to neurodivergent people both in and out of work is noteworthy. They constantly adjust their practice to meet the needs of their clients and follow through when promises are made. I have worked within and alongside many services in the NHS over the past 9 years, and this team truly stands out to me in terms of their dedication, graciousness, patience, helpfulness, passion, drive, and commitment to what they do."*

We are very proud of all that our staff do on a day-to-day basis for our patients and the Q Awards is a great platform to share and celebrate that work."

## Information for Neurodivergent People and their Families



Version 2  
Updated 02/2023  
Review Date 02/2025

Coventry and Warwickshire  
Integrated Care System

The e-booklet has been completely reviewed and updated and version 2 is available to view or download from the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System (ICS) website. A new section on neurodiversity and autism has also been added to the site.

[Download the booklet now](#)

[View the new neurodiversity and autism section of the Coventry and Warwickshire ICS website](#)



# Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust's commitment to neurodivergent people

**At the Trust's recent Trust Board meeting, they heard from a gentleman who joined to share his experience of accessing services provided by Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust (CWPT).**

He stated how painful it is to share his journey and that no one should experience what he had endured over the years, therefore felt it important to share so services could be improved for others.

He commented that he had not fitted into a perfect box and reminded us that autism is not a straight line. Over time he had sat on a number of waiting lists and had been passed back and forth, many times

he felt like a burden, not a person, only a statistic. He rarely saw the same person twice and continually had to revisit the trauma of having to introduce himself over and over again.

He shared that the most impactful things are often the smallest things which can make a difference. He shared a good experience with a clinician, where they had checked his notes in advance and created a safe space where he felt like he mattered. Professionals who showed him what good support looked like supported him with genuine kindness, a person-centred approach and took time to get to know him.



Gemma Cartwright

**Following this impactful presentation to the Board, Gemma Cartwright (System Clinical Lead for Neurodiversity) reflected both on the gentleman's experience plus that of the Trust's neurodivergent staff.**

**Gemma shared the proposed Trust commitment to neurodivergent people, written with neurodivergent people.**

CWPT will ensure a culture where autistic and

neurodivergent individuals feel recognised, valued and free to be their true authentic selves. CWPT supports that neurodivergence is not something to be 'cured' or 'fixed', instead is an inherent part of an individual's identity; however, this does not minimise the very real challenges they may experience. For individuals who require support to experience flexible and responsive access to services, opportunities and resources without facing unnecessary barriers. For individuals to experience sensitive services which support dignity, compassion and wellbeing.

## As a Provider, CWPT will

... ensure that autistic and neurodivergent individuals are included within services and for these services to be based on need. We will recognise and understand an individual's strengths and support needs and will provide equitable inclusion, access to support and Reasonable Adjustments, as required. We will include autistic and neurodivergent individuals in the design and review of relevant services.

## As an Employer, CWPT will

... ensure staff are skilled and knowledgeable about neurodiversity and inclusion so that autistic and neurodivergent staff feel proactively welcomed, supported, and empowered. There will be mechanisms in place for all autistic or neurodivergent staff to influence relevant policies and processes to ensure that they are inclusive.

## Inclusive Services for Autistic People

**Gemma, along with Samuel Keong (General Manager for Learning Disability and Neurodevelopmental Services), shared the work they are doing with colleagues across the Trust to improve access and the experience of services for autistic people.**

The work so far has brought out several key areas for improvements:

- Estates – Building an ambition for sensory-friendly environments.
- Data – Processes for capturing reasonable adjustments required for those who access and use our services.

- Co-production – Creating a centralised co-production resource toolkit for all directorates.
- Training – Supporting our workforce in improving knowledge and understanding of autism.
- Structures – Develop a Trust wide meeting structure including an overarching steering group, bringing together patient facing colleagues and key enablers to ensure good practice is shared and we work together to improve services.

The Trust Board supported both the commitment and the creation of a Trust wide steering group to create and oversee how this is achieved.



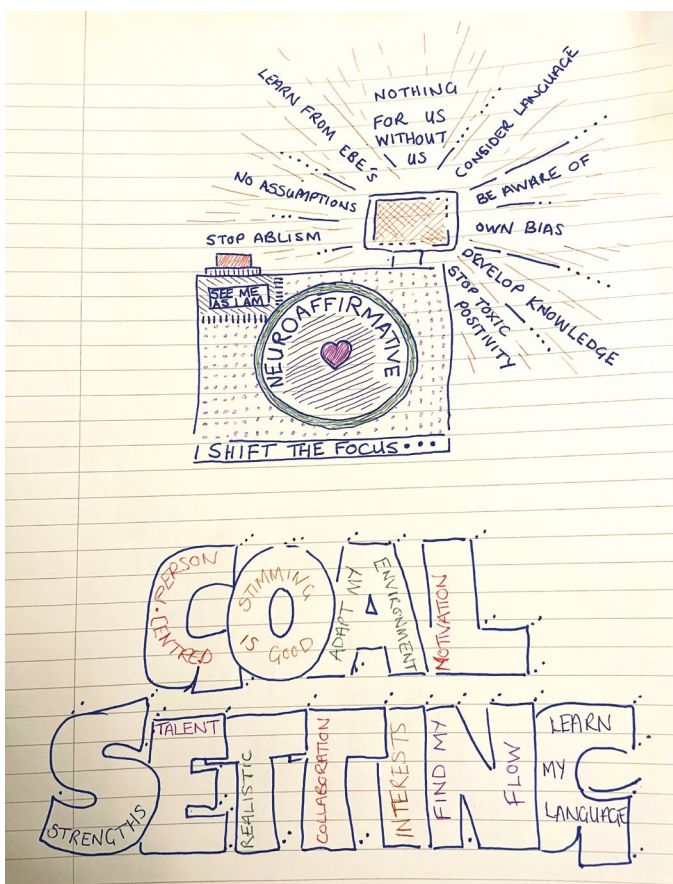
# NHS All Age Neurodevelopmental Team event: 'Neurodiversity Affirming Practice'



In January the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust's All Age Neurodevelopmental Team held an event entitled 'Neurodiversity Affirming Practice'.

They would like to share some of their reflections from the day.

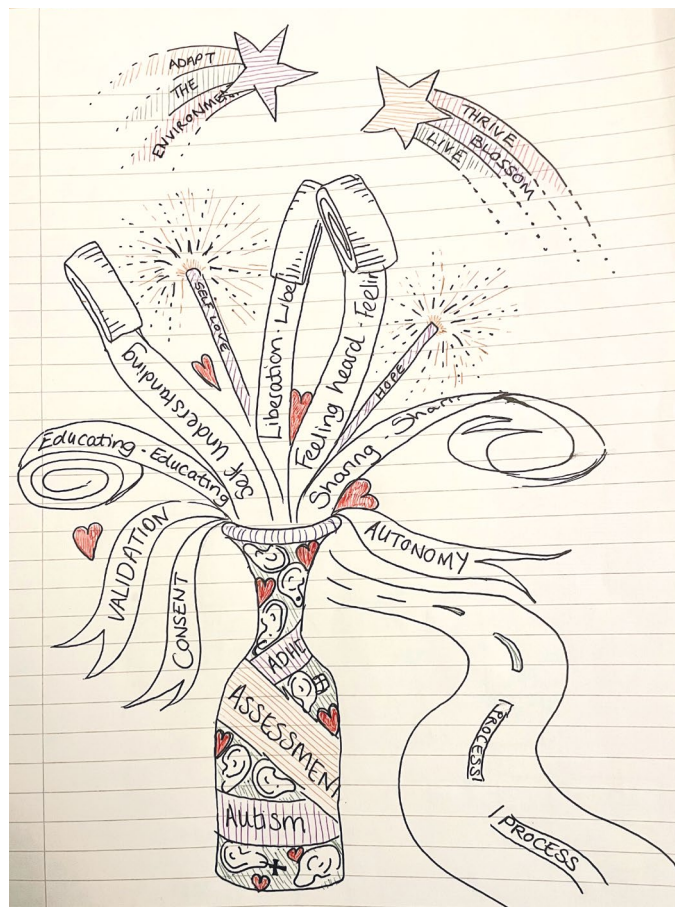
Lindsey Mitchell, Occupational Therapist, shares some of the fabulous drawings she created during the event.



Naomi Walters, Specialist Neurodevelopmental Clinician, Nurse and Therapist shares her personal reflection on 'What Neurodiversity Affirming means to her.

I like to break it down like this:

- Neuro: brains, sensory and integration system, nervous system, thinking system, communication system, responses.
- Diversity: differences (in this case different brains) can be ethnicity, sexuality, gender, beliefs, language and experiences. A diverse population brings diverse ideas, presence and value to society,



workplaces, community, education, relationships.

- Divergent: develop in different directions (not less, just different).
- Affirming: accepting, validating, equal not less.

Every one's brain is different, we all have different experiences and development of our understanding of the world, ourselves and others. When we consider neurodivergence, we think of a different brain wiring in those experiences and development.

I often use the analogy of the different operating system akin to a mobile phone type. An android and an iPhone are wired up and operate in different ways, they need different things to function and different ways to recharge, they both have their strengths and limitations. It is impossible to expect an iPhone to work using android software and android updates are not going to help an iPhone. This is just two standardised devices to consider in this analogy; imagine when thinking about brain operating systems



in human and how many differences there can be and different needs to function and recharge in the way which suits the individual. What this analogy provides us with is the introduction to the thinking that there can be distinct differences between what may be terms “neurotypical and neurodiverse / neurodivergent”.

Neuro- affirming to me means that as humans, individuals and professionals we have the intention of curiosity about each other in an accepting and validating way. That we suspend judgement as to whether there is a “right or wrong” communication style, way of doing things, how to relax or experience enjoyment and so on, but that we understand and validate more of each other’s experiences, needs and preferences. In addition, that we start to make changes and think about our environments, style of communicating and own biases. We particularly need affirming practice and day to day intention for our neurodivergent community as so often these individuals have experienced negative (and traumatic) feedback and situations due to a lack of acceptance of difference, leading to negative experiences of health, wellbeing and mental health.

### **Helen Petley, Assistant Psychologist with the school-age neurodevelopmental team shares her personal and insightful reflections as an autistic person.**

Although I’m relatively new to the team, the shared insights into the autistic experience have proven to be not just professionally valuable, but also personally therapeutic.

In 2017, I was 16, and it was the year I received my autism diagnosis. This diagnosis was far from empowering. The assessment was conducted without my knowledge or consent, and led to a report that painted my world with a deficits-based brush. As an academic, high-achieving teenage girl at a critical juncture of self-esteem development, reading comments such as ‘she lacks’ and observations about my awkwardness, as well as my parents’ thoughts on my deficits, left a lasting impact. Even now I find myself grappling with the diagnosis – am I, or aren’t I?

In addition to the label of autistic, I was handed simultaneous diagnoses of depression and anxiety, turning what was meant to be a tool for understanding into a complex web of challenges. The report’s language and lack of consent cast a shadow that exacerbated the symptoms of my other two diagnoses.

The aftermath was a year away from school, a period defined by my self-consciousness about how I

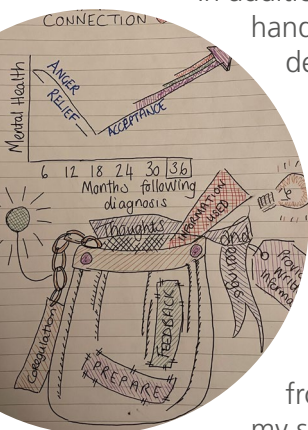
presented myself. I took charge of my education, teaching myself the first year of A-levels at home, on a computer in the attic. Eventually, I emerged well enough for college. Despite the challenges, I earned grades that allowed me to pursue my passion for psychology at university. Yet the ‘autistic’ label continues to hinder me, blocking access to certain forms of care. The phone call informing me that I couldn’t undergo CBT because ‘autism isn’t curable’ echoed a sentiment that felt isolating.

Fast forward to today, and I’m fortunate to wield a considerable amount of agency in my job. Working to my own schedule, I’ve found space where the label doesn’t define me. Whether I choose to identify with it or not is my prerogative. I use the label strategically, particularly when facing overwhelming situations or when struggling to regulate myself. At work, it becomes a tool to navigate challenges on difficult days, and I’m lucky enough to be in a workplace that is one of the most understanding and accommodating places I know.

However, I’m acutely aware of my privilege in being able to do this and be able to choose when I use the label. Many others rely on the label, as their autism presents daily challenges that need recognition. How autism is perceived significantly impacts their everyday experiences, influencing not only how they see themselves but, more crucially, how others, including professionals, treat them.

Enter neurodiversity-affirming language, a powerful ally in reshaping perspectives. Everyone, especially those in contact with autistic individuals, needs to be mindful of the words they choose. Shifting from deficits-based language to acknowledging differences and preferences is transformative. For example, reframing ‘lacking eye contact’ to ‘feels more comfortable gazing away during conversation’ not only respects individuality but also avoids implying inadequacy.

In conclusion, embracing neurodiversity-affirming practices is not just a professional responsibility but a deeply personal commitment. By challenging outdated language, fostering understanding and embracing diverse perspectives, we contribute to a world where neurodivergent individuals are not just seen and heard but valued for the distinct richness they bring to our society.



# Experts by Experience Area

## Welcome to the news from Coventry Parent Carer Forum



Coventry Parent Carer Forum is an independent group run by parent carers of children and young people aged 0-25 years with special educational needs and disabilities and/or health needs. They work alongside Coventry City Council and local health agencies

as equal partners so a parental voice is heard, as they work together to ensure services for children and young people and their families are the best they can be.

The Forum, which is newly formed, continues to grow and members have already started to make a difference to services in Coventry by sharing parent and carers views; they have been delighted to contribute to the direction and delivery of services across the city.

Two members have places at the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Board, a strategic group which comprises of representatives from the Local Council, Integrated Care Board, NHS Trusts and schools. They have been welcomed and supported by the Chair of the Board, Kirston Nelson, the Council's Chief Partnerships Officer.

One member also attends Health and Wellbeing Board meetings which oversees the Local Area's SEND Strategy and looks to tackle inequalities and improve outcomes with children, young people and their families informing everything they do.

Forum members have shared their lived experiences regarding transport, nursery placements and are currently helping shape the new Local Offer.

They run coffee mornings, art activities, online parental workshops and hold monthly Committee meetings to bring parent carers together. They have lots of different projects to look forward to, including the co-design of the new Local Offer, trialling an innovative approach to increase accessibility for families and enhance the amount of relevant and useful information contained in the offer.

They are pleased that funding has been secured to establish a Sensory Library in the City for families to use; new sensory toys and equipment will be arriving soon. They aim to offer loans of equipment on a monthly basis. They welcome any new volunteers who want to become involved and help them make this a great success – watch this space, further details to follow.

They, as parent carers, are confident they can make a positive difference with your help. They are supported

by Entrust Care Partnership, a local non-profit organisation commissioned by the national charity, Contact, to help develop a strong effective Forum.

Entrust Care Partnership Participation Worker, Helen Britton, has been busily reaching out to parents in schools, at coffee mornings and through social media to help grow, strengthen and shape the new Forum.

Helen said: *"If you are a parent carer and are interested in joining the Forum, you will find there is good support available. We understand that life can be demanding. We understand if you need to step away to support your child at short notice. By joining Coventry Parent Carer Forum you will meet new friends, grow your support network, get access to some great training. If you would wish to volunteer to help, we would welcome you whether you have just an occasional hour to give or more. Or if you would just like to chat to find out more the Forum's contact details can be found below."*



### Join your Parent Carer Forum!



**We need your help!**

Parent Carer Forums work with Local Councils and Health to improve services for families, children and young people with additional needs...

if you are interested in joining our newly formed Parent Carer Forum or would like to know more please contact Helen.

**We'd be delighted if you could help...**

- Make your voice heard
- Make your voice count
- Make a positive difference

Please contact Helen Britton if you'd like to know more:

**covpf@entrustcarepartnership.org.uk**  
or **07842 416955**  
**www.coventrypcf.com**



Web: [entrustcarepartnership.org.uk](http://entrustcarepartnership.org.uk)  
Email: [info@entrustcarepartnership.org.uk](mailto:info@entrustcarepartnership.org.uk)  
Tel: 01926 612748

Email Helen to find out more about the work of Coventry Parent Carer Forum and how you can get involved: [covpf@entrustcarepartnership.org.uk](mailto:covpf@entrustcarepartnership.org.uk)

Visit the website: [www.coventrypcf.com](http://www.coventrypcf.com) or follow them on Facebook: [Coventry Parent Carer Forum | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CoventryParentCarerForum)



# Young Adult Autism Peer Support Groups

The Young Adult Peer Support Groups are for young autistic adults age 18 - 25 years. Offered across Coventry and Warwickshire, these groups provide the opportunity for young autistic adults to meet others with similar experiences. In these informal safe spaces, young adults can sit and chat or play games, with free hot drinks available.

The groups are offered as part of the Community Autism Support Service (CASS). If you are interested in joining these groups, or know someone who is, please contact the dedicated Navigation Team:









Telephone: **024 7601 2333**

Email: [navigation@casspartnership.org.uk](mailto:navigation@casspartnership.org.uk)

Refer via website: <http://casspartnership.org.uk/make-a-referral>



# Rugby Autism Network support parents and carers in and around Rugby

 <p><b>Applying to join Rugby Autism Network Charity</b></p> <p>We invite local parents and carers of autistic children and young adults to apply for free Associate Membership.</p> <p>Be among the first to read about our autism-friendly events, support meetings, funding for days out and our other projects.</p> <p>Please find a link to our downloadable application form on our website: <a href="http://www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk">www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk</a></p> 	<p><b>Supporting Rugby Autism Network Charity</b></p> <p>Raising money for Rugby Autism Network Charity has never been easier!</p> <p>Fundraising is fundamental to the day-to-day running of our charity and essential for us to provide smaller projects for local families, resources for our library and access to workshops for parents and carers.</p> <p><b>Look out for our collection tins</b></p> <p><b>Enrol for local marathons</b></p> <p><b>Play Rugby Lotto</b></p> <p><b>Shop online using easyfundraising.org.uk</b></p> <p><b>Choose Rugby Autism Network when we feature on local supermarket token schemes</b></p> <p><b>Donate through facebook</b></p> <p><b>Donate by bank transfer, cheque or peoplesfundraising.com</b></p> <p><b>Choose your own sponsored event</b></p> <p><b>Thank you for your support!</b></p>	 <p><b>Supporting Rugby Autism Network Charity through playing the weekly Rugby Lotto gives you a chance to win £25,000!</b></p> <p>50% of the ticket price of £1 goes directly to Rugby Autism Network Charity on a monthly basis. This provides a reliable income which means we can offer tailored support to local families. Sign up to play by visiting <a href="http://www.rugbylotto.org/support/rugby-autism-network">www.rugbylotto.org/support/rugby-autism-network</a></p> <p>Players can choose to play either by Direct Debit, or a one-off payment for 1, 3, 6 or 12 months.</p>	<p><b>What is Autism?</b></p> <p>Autism is a lifelong, neuro-developmental condition. Early diagnosis can greatly improve quality of life. According to the National Autistic Society, there are at least 700,000 autistic people in the UK.</p> <p>Autism affects the way the person perceives the world and how they interact with others around them. Although there are common features, it is a spectrum condition. This means that the support people require varies greatly.</p> <p><b>Some of the key features of Autism:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Social Interaction:</b> Challenges with understanding others' feelings and intentions, and with expressing one's own emotions.</li> <li><b>Social Communication:</b> Challenges with understanding verbal and non-verbal communication including facial expressions, tone of voice and sarcasm.</li> <li><b>Reliance of Familiarity and Routine:</b> This may include coping behaviours, such as hand-flapping, rocking, spinning, and repeating words or phrases.</li> <li><b>Frequently the presence of intense special interests.</b></li> <li><b>Issues with the sensory world:</b> Being under and/or over-stimulated by sight, sound, touch, smell or taste. Sensory issues can give rise to anxiety which can be at a much higher level than in those who are not autistic.</li> </ul> <p>Autistic people often describe autism as being a part of who they are. With preparation, planning ahead and the right levels of support, autistic people are able to live active and fulfilling lives.</p>	 <p><b>Contact us:</b></p> <p>The Trustees Rugby Autism Network 128 Lawford Lane Bilton Rugby CV22 7JT</p> <p><a href="http://www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk">www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk</a> admin@rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk</p> <p>facebook: /rugbyautismnetwork /groups/rugbyautismnetworkchat</p> 	  <p><b>Supporting parents and carers in and around Rugby, Warwickshire</b></p>  <p><a href="http://www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk">www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk</a> Registered Charity Number: 1167720</p>
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Find out more about the Network on their website [www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk](http://www.rugbyautismnetwork.co.uk) or download their [leaflet](#).

## We're supporting national campaign dates

March and April see two very important national campaign dates:

**Neurodiversity Celebration Week**  
- 18 - 24 March 2024

Visit the [Neurodiversity Week](#) website to find out more about what's going on and how you can get involved or register for online sessions taking place throughout the week.



**Autism Acceptance Week - 2 - 8 April 2024**

Visit the [National Autistic Society](#) website to find out how more about what's going on and how you can get involved.





# Professionals Corner

## Meeting the needs of autistic adults in mental health services

**The number of adults diagnosed as autistic in England is rising rapidly; improvements in recent decades in detection and**

**diagnosis in children mean that with each passing year, increasingly large numbers of young people are transitioning into adulthood with an autism diagnosis. Combined with a rising number of people being diagnosed in adulthood and a higher prevalence of mental ill health compared to the general population, adults diagnosed as autistic now represent a significant and fast-growing number of patients supported by adult mental health services in England.**

We know that with earlier, well-targeted community support, many admissions and long stays in mental

health inpatient units could potentially be avoided.

This guidance will help drive our collective efforts to bring about improvements in the provision of mental health care for autistic adults in all mental health services. It will support staff working in mental health to better understand and feel confident about meeting the needs of autistic people who access their services. We hope too that the information will be useful to commissioners and staff across all health settings including primary care and acute as we collectively seek to improve the health outcomes and experiences of care for autistic people.

We are grateful to those people with lived experience and from clinical, scientific, commissioning and service management backgrounds for their invaluable input in the development of this document.

Read the full guidance document

