

Learning Disability and Autism OGIM - 2021

Why change is needed

- National data suggests that 50% of people with a learning disability experience chronic loneliness.
- County Durham has an historically low employment rate for adults with learning disabilities. 2017/18 data indicates 1.2% were in paid employment compared to 5.9% in the North East.
- People with a learning disability are four times more likely than the general population to die of something which could have been prevented (Disability Rights Commission, 2006).
- An estimated 8,500 (2%) of the population in County Durham have a learning disability. However only 3969 people are registered as having a learning disability with their GP practice.
- Autistic people have a higher rate of mortality and of suicide than the general population does. The average age of death for autistic people is 54 compared with 80 in the general UK population (Office for National Statistics).
- People with a learning disability, often have poorer physical and mental health than other people. Research suggests that up to 70% of autistic adults have at least one mental health problem, with 40% having more than one.
- Access to NHS services is often limited and people with a learning disability do not often receive the same quality service and screening opportunities as the rest of the population.
- Autistic people often find it difficult to access mental health and other services due to a lack of understanding of the condition and lack of reasonably adjusted services.
- The Autism Act, of 2009 aimed to ensure that autistic people had access to diagnostic assessment and equality of access to all health and community services yet in 2020 autistic people still face inequity of access to services and unacceptable waits to obtain appropriate diagnostic assessment and treatment services within reasonable timescales.
- Public Health England reports that every day about 30,000 to 35,000 adults with a learning disability are taking psychotropic medicines when they do not have the health conditions the medicines are for. Children and young people are also prescribed them.
- Approximately a third of people with a learning disability, autism or both currently in hospital have been in an inpatient setting for five years or longer.
- Only 15% of adults with a learning disability in England have a secure long-term tenancy or their own home (DH, 2016).

Objectives

There are several plans in place to improve the lives of people with learning disability and autistic people living in County Durham. The overarching aims set out in the County Durham Joint Health and Social Care Commissioning Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities currently cover 5 key areas:

- Joint Commissioning.
- Improve understanding of needs to commission appropriate services and facilitate partnership working.
- Improve understanding of service provision and develop the market to better meet needs.
- Improve outcomes and quality of life.
- Deliver Transforming care.

The Think Autism in County Durham Strategy has six overarching aims:

- The needs of autistic people are known and understood.
- The workforce understands and meets the needs of autistic people.
- Autistic people have good physical and mental health.
- Autistic people and their families receive the right amount of support at the right time.
- Autistic people to participate equally within their community.
- Autistic people access aspirational employment, volunteering or learning opportunities.

For more information, please see: [Joint Commissioning Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities](#) and [Durham insight Learning Disability Factsheet](#)

[Think Autism in County Durham Strategy](#).

The objective of this OGIM is to provide an overarching framework under which the various learning disability and autism workstreams in the County can align their activities.

Our high level objectives for learning disabilities and autism, therefore are:

- People can lead fulfilling lives and more people with a learning disability will have a greater say and be able to decide for themselves the way they live their lives and choose how they are supported.
- Young people and their families will be supported and prepared effectively to move into adulthood.
- More people with a learning disability and autistic people will have health concerns or unmet health needs identified early and treated effectively.
- Autistic people can access mental health interventions that meet their needs in line with the Autism framework and Autism Act.
- More people will be supported to live independently and safely within their own homes and community for as long as possible, having their own tenancies - or even have the opportunity to own a home.
- We will also see a reduction in the number of people cared for 'out of area' and a reduction in the use of inpatient services and length of stay in hospital settings; ensuring that those with more complex needs are able to live, and be supported, locally.
- A reduction in waiting times and a more holistic approach to the autism assessment.

Goals

- Develop keyworkers for children and young people with the most complex needs and their carers/families.
- Reduced numbers of people in specialist learning disability or autism inpatient settings.
- The 7 keys of Citizenship are fully embedded increasing outcomes such as independence, wellbeing, choice, control and community resilience.
- Increased focus on preventative support, early help and timely intervention, with the right information, advocacy, advice and support to help prevent/manage a crisis.
- More people with a learning disability and/or autism living in their own homes receiving personalised care and support, which helps them make choices, maximise independence and reach their personal goals.
- More people with a learning disability and/or, autism in paid employment as well as meaningful activity, education and training.
- More children, young people and adults with a learning disability each year will have an annual health check and better access to health and social care.
- To raise greater awareness of the appropriate use of psychotropic medication.
- To reduce the number of people with a learning disability and /or autism who die prematurely unnecessarily.
- Equity of access to community-based specialist mental health, learning disability and autism services, which includes the best care, the right accommodation and good provision of assistive technology and equipment.
- To share the learning from LeDeR reviews with partners across health and social care to improve care.

COVID - 19

Short Term

- Keeping people safe- people with learning disabilities are at higher risk from Covid 19 due to levels of respiratory related mortality); workforce being able to support people safely and practice infection control where people lack capacity, have increased anxiety/distress or have behaviours which challenge.
- Keeping people connected and providing mental health support- increased vulnerability, loneliness & isolation during the pandemic emergency; post trauma among frontline staff (key workers).
- Address backlog of clinical activity/health checks due to restrictions (e.g. health checks, autism assessments).
- Focus targeted work on vulnerable and marginalised groups as part of COVID-19 recovery to reduce preventable inequalities.

Medium Term

- Respond to impact of Covid19 on mental health and wellbeing, continuity of care, bereavement, relationship management, financial resilience, changes to social conditions.
- Impact on the most vulnerable communities and need to ensure equitable access to support and advice.

Long Term

- Long term impact of the socioeconomic consequences - Impact of unemployment, reduced finances, 'austerity', relationship breakdown.
- Long term impact of the pandemic/lockdown/social distancing on mental health and behaviours, anxiety and fear, pressure on family carers and on the workforce.
- Delays due to the pandemic in developing new services for people with learning disabilities and/or autism with complex needs; impact on the market, design of and financial impact on services to take into account infection control measures.

Triple Aim Outcome Measures

Health Outcomes	Patient Experience Outcomes	Workforce Outcomes
Acute admission rates for people with a learning disability	A measure of people with a learning disability being able to have a degree of independence	A measure of staff vacancy rates within Learning Disability services
	Patient satisfaction scores	A measure of staff satisfaction
	A measure of waiting times for assessment within the Learning Disability service	A measure of the skill mix within the workforce

