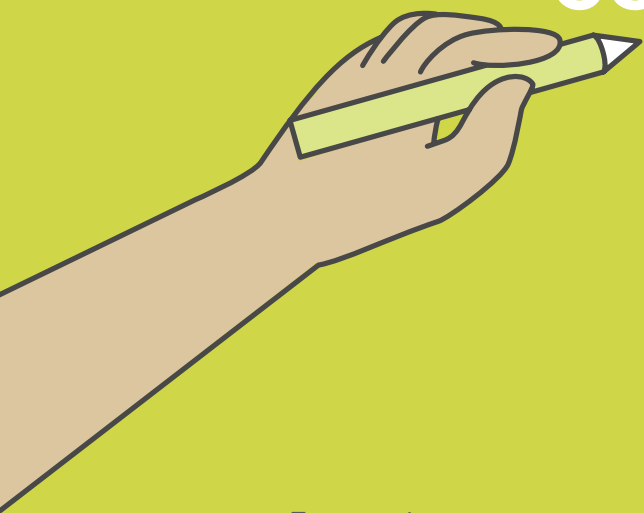


MAKING GREATER MANCHESTER AUTISM FRIENDLY

Greater Manchester
All Age Autism Strategy
April 2022 - March 2025



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FOREWORD

by Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Welcome to Greater Manchester's All Age Autism Strategy 2022-2025.

I am pleased to introduce this new strategy, which for the first time includes children and young people, and their families. It follows our first ever Greater Manchester Autism Strategy 2019-22 which focused on improving support for autistic adults.

None of us expected that the Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly 2019-2022 would span two years of a global pandemic.

The pandemic shone a light on the ingrained inequalities which already existed in Greater Manchester, particularly around health and care, housing and employment.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we must redouble our efforts to tackle those inequalities, particularly for disabled people.

This strategy sets out how Greater Manchester is committed at all levels to make all spaces better for autistic people and their families so that

they are understood, valued, have aspirations and feel like they can reach their potential. It has been developed after engagement with autistic people including young people, family members, practitioners and commissioners to set out our ambition for Greater Manchester's All Age Strategy.

We must all work together so that in Greater Manchester autistic people receive an education that meets their needs and sets them up for the adulthood of their choosing without limitations.

We must ensure that autistic people feel confident in their schools, organisations and workplaces where reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that all autistic people live a good life, grow up, get on and grow old in a fairer, more equal Greater Manchester.

We look forward to working with you to make this a reality.



GREATER MANCHESTER'S VISION FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE

This is a statement of what we want Greater Manchester to be for autistic people, including children and young people and their families. It is ambitious – because it should be. Achieving our vision will take longer than the duration of this autism strategy, but by stating clearly where we want to get to, we will make sure that this strategy and subsequent ones all make progress towards it.

Our vision for Greater Manchester is:

To make Greater Manchester an autism friendly place to live. This means a place where you:

- Are understood and valued
- Feel safe and part of your community
- Have aspirations and feel like you can reach your potential
- Get a timely diagnosis
- Get support after your diagnosis
- Receive an education that meets your needs and sets you up for the adulthood you choose
- See and meet professionals who understand autism
- Can find advice and help about services
- Are confident that the organisations, schools, colleges, health and care providers and employers in your life will make reasonable adjustments

“It is vital you support all areas of priorities because we cannot let anyone, no matter how old, be left behind for another generation and miss out on the support and wellbeing their peers have access to.”

“We need a safe autism community and it is about time the people that can do something about it do.”

Terminology

This strategy uses Identity-First language (i.e. “autistic people” rather than “people with autism”) as this was the stated preference of many of the autistic group of stakeholders who engaged with this work. This also aligns with research based on the response of over 3,000 people, led by the National Autistic Society. We do, however, acknowledge that some people prefer the term “person with autism”. The term autistic people includes autistic children and adults and those with or without a learning disability.

Whilst this strategy refers to autistic people, we acknowledge that many autistic people live with co-occurring conditions that may be described as neurodiverse. We will work with other organisations and people with lived experience where appropriate to improve awareness of autism and neurodiversity.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on work with the key stakeholders in Greater Manchester listed below, we have come up with the key priorities for the Greater Manchester Autism Strategy April 2022- March 2025.

Those stakeholders include: Autistic people including autistic children and young people, Family Members, the 10 GM Localities of Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan, the NHS Integrated Care System, GM Equality Alliance, GM Disabled People's panel, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and other VCSE organisations working with autistic people in GM.

- Increasing understanding and awareness – this includes **training, campaigns** and **guidance** on reasonable adjustments.
- Improving access to education and transition – this means working with professionals, parents, children and young people to **improve services** for children and young people and those about to become adult.
- Improving employment opportunities- this means making sure more autistic people have **access to employment** including support around recruitment, retaining jobs and progression in their careers.
- Tackling health and care inequalities including supporting **better training**, work on **reasonable adjustments** within settings such as **mental health** services. Identifying more **social opportunities** and seeking to **support diverse communities** such as those experiencing racial inequalities and LGBTQ+ communities and older autistic people. **Increasing autism competent advocacy services** and **improving diagnosis and post diagnosis support**.
- Building the right support and inpatient support, including increasing **support around**

housing. Sharing better information on housing choices, raising **awareness of Care Treatment Reviews** and processes and **improving professional understanding of autistic people's mental health needs** and issues such as mental capacity.

- Improving the experience of autistic people within the criminal and youth justice systems including **victims and offenders**.



NEXT STEPS

- GMAC will develop an implementation plan for year 1 by July 2022
- We will ask localities to develop their own implementation plans each year too and ask for those to be developed by July 2022
- GMAC will form some task and finish groups and develop terms of reference for those groups to start between May and July 2022
- Localities will identify people to attend the working groups and start working on the actions for the localities



CHAPTER 1: PROGRESS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

In April 2019, we launched the first Greater Manchester Autism Strategy, “Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly”. This three-year strategy was the first regional autism strategy in England, and signalled a new way of working across the whole of the Greater Manchester region to improve support and society for autistic adults. It set out a range of actions under four chapters which identified a number of priorities. The Greater Manchester region is made up of Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan.

Those four chapters were:

- Access
- Community
- Health and Support
- Employment and Transition

After publishing Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly, we set up implementation groups to bring together relevant professionals, autistic people and their families to work towards the actions in the strategy. These groups have been crucial to making progress. We also brought together groups of autistic people and family members via the GMAC Advisory Groups and ensured that they were involved in all aspects of the strategy.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on everyone’s life. We know that this is particularly true of autistic people and their families, many of

whom have felt completely left stranded, struggling to keep up with changing rules and without the support they need. The pandemic also impacted Greater Manchester’s autism strategy. Some of the plans that we had were not able to happen during lockdowns, while others had to move to online meetings. We want to thank the autistic people, families and professionals who were involved in this work for being patient and flexible while we tried to keep making progress on Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly. Although we might not have made all the progress that we wanted in the last three years, we could not have done what we have without their dedicated support.

We know that creating a Greater Manchester that works for autistic people and their families isn’t just a three-year project. It’s the work of a generation. Our first strategy laid the foundations for future strategies to build on. In our new strategy, we will set out how we will make more progress with and for, autistic people and their families across the 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester.

For a full list of progress made under the last strategy please see Appendix one.

As a result of the first Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly strategy, we have been able to:

- Secure high-profile commitment to autistic people and their families by the GM Devolved Health and Social Care system including from the Mayor. Our autistic adult and parent advisory groups have been key to holding these partners to account on their commitments
- Make contact with autistic people, and family members, who want to get involved in strategic work across GM and support those groups to meet each other via groups such as the GMAC Advisory Groups
- Challenge and provide evidence to the system on what needs to be done to tackle key inequalities faced by autistic adults, including the “post code lottery” of diagnosis and post diagnosis support
- Make sure hospitals across GM have the information they need to make reasonable adjustments for autistic people
- Create a new positive employment campaign “GM Enabling Employment”, which led to the development of the GM Neurodiversity and Learning Disability Employer Network. This aims to offer peer support to employers who are committed to employing autistic people
- Improve the autism-friendly information available to many services, including housing and police custody suites
- Support localities and other organisations to communicate better with autistic people and supported co-production
- Improve the information and guidance offered to families of autistic people through expanded parent/family seminars
- Improve information and social opportunities for autistic adults through monthly online peer support sessions
- Gain funding for a pilot on post-diagnosis support for adults starting in July 2022. Through this pilot, more autistic people will be able to receive a peer led and delivered post diagnostic offer. In addition, some autistic people will become paid employees and learn skills to become peer mentors
- Develop an offer to diagnosticians in the North West to run a peer support group to share good practice.



CHAPTER 2: SETTING THE NEXT THREE YEARS' PRIORITIES

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, some of the aspirations of the first Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly strategy had to be postponed or changed. We know that we are a long way from achieving the ambitious vision we set out for the first strategy. However, we hope that the last strategy set the foundations for this new strategy to build on. Crucial relationships have been developed with key stakeholders including: autistic people, family members, professionals in a variety of settings, commissioners and decision makers. We are strongly committed to continuing to making these even stronger in this new strategy.

Last year, the Government also published a new five-year national autism strategy for England. For the first time this also included children. There are opportunities to make sure that commitments in the national strategy are embedded in Greater Manchester, as well as identifying where we think GM can do more and be more ambitious. We also believe this is the time to bring autistic children and young people into GM's autism strategy.

This chapter sets out what we heard from autistic people and their families throughout our consultation on the new autism strategy, before identifying the most important things that GMAC, localities and the NHS will do in the next three years to get us closer to our vision.



How we decided what is important

This new GM autism strategy will start in April 2022. We started conversations with our stakeholders in July 2021 at the first of three stakeholder events. By stakeholders we mean people who have an interest and a say in the subject due to a variety of reasons including lived experience or professional input. Over this stakeholder event and the subsequent two sessions, we spoke directly with around 30 people. We also attended locality Autism Partnership Board meetings in Tameside, Oldham and Wigan.

We ran a survey from July to October 2021, which was responded to by 77 people, including 34 autistic people and 29 family members. There was also an easy read version of the survey available for those people who needed it.

Using the events and the feedback, alongside the previous strategy and the new national autism strategy, we identified a number of things that should be kept in this new strategy. We then looked at the most important themes that were missing and what should be added.

The Autistic Adult Advisory Group and the Family Member Advisory Group also shared ideas about priorities for the strategy between July and November 2021.

Between November 2021 and January 2022, GMAC carried out further engagement on the draft strategy. 26 people (some representing groups) fed back. In particular, this led to more focus on the following issues;

- Mental health across the board including amongst children and young people
- The under-identification of women and girls and the lack of differentiation in support
- How people from different backgrounds and communities experience support (sometimes called intersectionality) and the impact that has on access to diagnosis and support. For example, this could include acknowledgement of the impact of trauma in some people from LGBTQ+ communities, communities experiencing racial inequality and older people

- The importance of advocacy as well as peer support
- The need for more promotion of this autism strategy going forward

From December 2021 to January 2022, the Greater Manchester Youth Network carried out engagement with 20 young people between 11-25 years old across Greater Manchester on both the GM Autism strategy and the GM Learning Disability strategy. This piece of work was particularly welcome as no specific engagement work had been carried out with young people on the strategy. **The priorities the group identified were:**

- More social opportunities to feel less isolated or lonely
- Better support and understanding at school or in education
- More accessible employers, particularly around recruitment and better guidance on careers including to self-employment
- Clearer information about public transport
- Better autism understanding in health services
- Better understanding among police so young autistic people feel safe in Greater Manchester.

The group also asked for the following:

Youth voice is key to the creation and implementation of all strategies. Youth voice which is often overlooked and underrepresented needs to be included.

Both the autism and learning disability strategies should be accessible to both autistic young people and young people with learning disabilities i.e. available to read, watch, or listen to in different formats using accessible language and youth-friendly formats.

Updates on change and development resulting from both strategies should be communicated to young people on a regular basis. Progress on the strategies and key developments should be made clear and communicated to people with autism or a learning disability.

What autistic people and their families told us over the course of our engagement work

“We need the strategy to focus on delivery”

“We need more diverse voices to be heard”

“We need all age, all life, holistic approaches”

“ We need more people to know about the strategy next time”

“We need more measurable outcomes in the strategy”

“Poor communication between services/ organisations make things worse”

“Employment - When built around a neurodivergent employee they can excel in ways neurotypical ones can't”

“Many autistic people are part of other marginalised groups. Working with those groups gives us more community, support and resources”

“If diagnosis took place in a timely manner and post diagnostic support (that was valuable to the autistic person/ not just the parents) was made available, many of the other problems listed would be greatly diminished”

“We need a dedicated autism support service away from learning disabilities and mental health for those without those issues. We are missing out on so much support because we don't have access to this”

Below were some specific comments from the young people

“We should better educate mainstream schools on how to support autistic students”

“I have struggled with my identity and that has made me lonely”

“Include us, don't exclude us”

“We need more opportunities and choice to find work”

Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly's new priorities

The following actions came out from our consultation as the most important: We have included them under our actions in Chapter 3. We have also decided to develop an annual Implementation plan to ensure we are staying on track so some of these priorities will be in the implementation plan if not in this document.

- Diagnosis and post-diagnosis (including peer support), and in particular consider the needs of women and diverse communities that are often under identified
- Getting support from social care and ensuring a much better understanding of autism amongst social care professionals
- Mental health inequality and reasonable adjustments, including for example eating disorders and suicide prevention as well as the impact of trauma and sensory differences
- Increasing social opportunities including challenging mainstream services to make more adjustments and be more accessible
- Considering the needs of diverse communities.
- Understanding the impact of ageing and autism.
- Increase professional and public understanding of autism.
- Including more autistic voices including children and young people and people from diverse communities in our autism strategy work
- Keeping safe from crime, including hate crime,
- Improving employment opportunities for autistic people

As well as these topics, there were also a number of things that need to work better across all aspects of autistic people and their families' lives. These cross-cutting themes are:

- Addressing the postcode lottery and consistent offers across GM
- More joined-up services/support. In other words, making sure that services are not only communicating better with autistic people and their families but working together more closely in partnership
- Improving autism understanding and training

Many of these priorities are similar to the six priorities in the National Autism Strategy published in July 2021 a link to this strategy can be found [here](#). This GM strategy will use similar headings as the national strategy, covering all the priorities that we have identified to show how local and national actions will work together to make Greater Manchester autism friendly.





The values that will guide the strategy

The values underpinning the strategy are important because they help decide what specific actions will be taken, and how GMAC, the localities and the NHS will be accountable for progress.

- 1. Nothing about us without us:** All of this work has to be co-produced. What we mean by this is that we want all of the actions and outcomes to be co-designed, co-delivered and evaluated by people with lived experience
- 2. Difference = strength:** We firmly believe that our community benefits from the differences that autistic bring in terms of thinking and approach and that we want to go beyond autism awareness towards autism acceptance and celebration
- 3. Rights:** We are committed to ensuring that autistic people and their families understand their rights and entitlements
- 4. Clear accessible and honest communication:** We believe that the most 'autism friendly' communication is accessible, clear, honest and transparent. We want to support all services to be clear, even if the message is a difficult one
- 5. The importance of diverse experiences:** We believe that diversity of our community in GM is a huge strength and we want to make sure that we hear from as many communities in GM as we can. We are aware that we will need to do additional work to make this happen. We will respect people's identities and always be aware that individuals may have many intersectional identities

CHAPTER 3: WHAT WE WILL DO

Priority	Action	Impact
Understanding and awareness	We will support the roll out of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in autism and learning disability, with a clear autism training strategy in each locality which covers Tier 1, 2 and 3 of the Autism Core Capabilities framework. We will be looking to increase take up of this, in particular. In mental health services across GM as well as the primary care services. All training will be co-designed, co-delivered and co evaluated by people with lived experience of all ages. GMAC will also look at increasing training on reasonable adjustments in Mental Health services.	Autistic people will feel like there will be some better understanding amongst professionals in GM, in particular those working within Health and Social Care.
	The GM Autism Training group will work with localities to make sure quality standards on training are met in the GM Training Strategies/plans. We will also make links with the GM LD and Autism Workforce Strategy.	To make sure there is consistent high-quality training available across GM which means that autistic people will feel better understood and supported.
	Develop a GM reasonable adjustment audit tool to help professionals make the right adjustments and support future National Autistic Society campaigns to improve understanding in businesses and shops.	There will be more reasonable adjustments being offered in GM in a variety of settings and a reliable system to check claims that organisations are offering reasonable adjustments.
	Share the national public understanding campaign under the national autism strategy and decide how GMAC can best help embed this in GM and how autistic people will be at the heart of improving autism understanding in GM.	Better public understanding of autism.

Priority	Action	Impact
Understanding and awareness	Promote teacher training opportunities, including the Autism Education Trust, to embed actions in the national autism strategy. As part of this we will particularly promote the voice of autistic children and young people to train staff and increase understanding and acceptance.	Better understanding of autism by professionals including commissioners, teachers and school staff, leading to services that meet needs better.
	Continue to work with Transport for Greater Manchester on developing a coherent policy on concessionary travel passes for autistic people and to work to generally improve access to public transport in GM.	Autistic people who need travel passes will find it easier to get the pass and therefore be able to access the community better.
	GMAC will facilitate better understanding of autism in diverse communities of Greater Manchester and also share information on cultural awareness training in partnership with GM Equality Alliance.	Diverse communities will feel they have a better understanding of autism, and autism organisations will gain a better understanding of cultural competence.
Improving access to education and transition	Create an Education Implementation group to work with partners including parents, young people and staff in education to make improvements. This will include work to improve transitions, understanding of the impact of stress and anxiety in school, colleges and other educational institutions, making reasonable adjustments and listening to the voice of children and young people.	Schools and colleges will feel more confident that there is reliable and consistent information and support on autism. Teachers will feel better equipped to work with autistic students. Parents and autistic children and young people will be clearer about what they can expect from schools and have an improved experience of education.
	To support co-production with autistic young people across GM and in the localities, GMAC will [seek additional funding to] create a young people's advisory group.	More autistic children, young people and adults will feel engaged in the work of the strategy and feel like they have been part of the co-design and co-delivery of the strategy and its implementation.
	Continue to trial the Transition templates in GM and roll out if successful.	Autistic children without an EHCP will have better access to support in transition.

Priority	Action	Impact
Improving access to education and transition	Work with Complex Safeguarding and Youth Offending Teams to increase understanding of autism.	Autistic children and young people will feel better understood and supported.
	Promote the capability statements for children's social workers to embed the national autism strategy and generally improve understanding of autism amongst social workers. This will include work with the local universities offering social work training.	Autistic children and families receive more understanding in the social work systems and this will lead to better support.
	GMAC will continue to develop information for: • Parents of autistic people including for parents of pre-school children • Parents of children in transition between primary and secondary school • Parents of young people in transition between childhood and adulthood.	Parents will feel better informed about support, intervention, rights and approaches available to support their children/young people.
	To improve information available to autistic children and young people on diagnosis, transition at various points of life, mental health and thinking about the future. We will make sure this information is peer developed and strengths based.	Autistic children and young people will feel better informed about autism and how to access support when and if needed.
	Identify opportunities to improve support specifically for autistic parents.	Autistic parents will feel better supported by the system and wider community.
Supporting more autistic people into employment	Work with the statutory sector employers to improve experiences of autistic employees within their own organisations. This may include more autism friendly recruitment practices and developing employee networks for Neurodiverse staff.	Autistic people will be more likely to maintain employment in the statutory sector and have a better experience of employment.

Priority	Action	Impact
Supporting more autistic people into employment	Establish of an Autistic Entrepreneur and business owners' network.	The autistic entrepreneurs and business owners' group will ensure that autistic entrepreneurs have a peer support network, more access to formal support and make professionals connections that will be beneficial to their businesses.
	Expand and develop the GM Neurodiversity and Learning Disability Employer Network.	There will be a well- established employer network so that autistic people will have more confidence in those companies that are members of the group, and the companies and employers will feel more confident to employ more autistic people in the future and to better support their existing workforce.
	Support the development of a GM Supported Employment Forum and a programme of events jointly run with NW British Association of Supported Employment (BASE).	More opportunities for employment support organisations to share good practice and insight into supporting autistic people better. Improving the experience of using those services for autistic people.
Tackling health and care inequalities	Develop and promote a core post-diagnostic support offer, including peer support. Work with GMAC partners to launch this offer across GM. In particular we will look at addressing the under diagnosis of women, people from diverse communities and work to improve engagement from those groups through a regional public awareness campaign.	There will be a more consistent diagnostic and post diagnostic offer across GM with more access to peers at the point of diagnosis. Peer support will be paid so this will increase employment opportunities for autistic people in GM.
	The group will consider the need for pre diagnostic support and whether the post diagnostic offer can be made available with some adaptation, to people at all stages of the diagnostic journey.	
	The GMAC Post Diagnosis pilot for adults will contribute to this work.	

Priority	Action	Impact
Tackling health and care inequalities	Work with statutory advocacy providers to identify levels of autism understanding, and support them to develop consistent training.	More autistic people will feel like they have support to have their needs met and will understand their rights.
	Continue to convene the North West diagnosticians working group to share best practice and ideas. Share the findings of wider work to support improvements to diagnosis across the North West.	Clinicians and practitioners will get more peer support, and pick up good practice tips that can be implemented locally to improve their own offers.
	Increase understanding of mental health, including suicide risks, for autistic people and work to reduce this in GM by partnering with the GM Suicide Prevention board to share best practice and resources. There will also be specific work to increase understanding on autism in eating disorder services and general mental health services. This work will include promoting the use of the National Autistic Society's new guide for talking therapists.	More appropriate support for autistic people leading to reduced mental health needs.
	Explore opportunities to support research into the most effective social support for autistic adults in partnership with local universities and councils.	More evidence-based research in order to commission services.
	Increase social opportunities for autistic adults and children and young people in GM regardless of whether they are considered eligible for social care and for them to be accurately assessed and recognised. This will include scoping the potential for a National Autistic Society branch in GM. In addition we will encourage mainstream organisations to become more inclusive of autistic people. Some specific work on increasing accessibility of the rich GM Cultural sector would also be helpful for this.	Less social isolation from some of the most marginalised people in any community.

Priority	Action	Impact
Tackling health and care inequalities	Continue to improve engagement with diverse communities in the strategic work and the activities that GMAC runs. This includes LGBTQ+ people and communities experiencing racial inequality. This will include developing insight to inform GMAC's own advice service and to share best practice to reduce barriers to support.	More evidence-based support given to diverse communities via the GMAC information offer. Increased trust and improved relationship between some diverse communities and GMAC.
	If funding can be secured, GMAC will also develop business cases with relevant partner organisations to try and increase support for diverse autistic communities in GM.	
	GMAC will work with the NHS England LeDeR programme on the implementation in Greater Manchester. (The learning from deaths of people with a learning disability (LeDeR) programme was set up as a service improvement programme to look at why people are dying, and what we can do to change services locally and nationally to improve the health of people with a learning disability, and reduce health inequalities. From January 2022 this has been extended to autistic people to raise awareness of this programme amongst autistic people and their families).	In the event of an unexpected death of an autistic person there will be a thorough review to ensure there are lessons learnt for the future.
	Work with NHS England to embed improvements to primary care in GM. This will include work to improve GP recording of autism and roll out annual health checks following NHS England's pilots.	More autistic people will get a health action plan which means that there is a better understanding of health needs for this population and the person will be healthier.
	Work with a wide group of stakeholders including people from health; social care, people with lived experience and VCSE groups on the impact of ageing on autistic people.	More autistic people will have services that can make appropriate reasonable adjustments as they get older and there is a better understanding of the gaps that exists for this group.

Priority	Action	Impact
Building the right support and inpatient care	Develop a business case for an autism housing advocacy service to be established across GM.	If successfully funded, autistic people having difficulties with housing would be able to get specialist advocacy support.
	Share information about best practice community support for autistic people, including schemes like Autism Accreditation.	We will have more autism competent services available to people within GM.
	Develop relationships with local homeless services to share best practice and improve autism understanding.	Autistic people will feel better supported by the homeless services in GM.
	Raise awareness of autism amongst Council disabled Facilities Grant teams.	More autistic people and their families being successful in accessing DFGs.
	Continue to update and promote the GM housing guides based on feedback from autistic people and their families.	Autistic people and families can get clearer information on housing.
	Continue to encourage and support autism specific supported housing schemes and share best practice across the region including best practice in relation to design.	Autistic people will have access to more housing options.
	Look at reasonable adjustments that need to be made for autistic people within housing services, including considering a "champions" model.	Autistic people will feel better supported by housing providers.
	Work with the Greater Manchester Housing Providers group to improve understanding of the needs of autistic people and to increase capacity for appropriate housing.	Autistic people will be able to access more appropriate housing.
	Increase awareness of Care Treatment Reviews and Care Education Treatment Reviews among autistic people and families. GMAC will develop some workshops and resources to support this.	Ensure that autistic people and their families understand their rights in relation to CTRs and CETRAs and know how to ask for them.

Priority	Action	Impact
Building the right support and inpatient care	Increase professional understanding of mental health risks of children, young people and autistic adults and also of the importance of the Mental Capacity Act.	Autistic people and their families will feel better understood and supported by professionals.
Improving support within the Criminal Justice and Youth Justice System	Through GM Health and Justice Steering Group for the GM Health and Justice Strategy , work with the criminal justice system to develop a GM Prison support pathway for autistic people.	Better experience of prison for autistic people and more reasonable adjustments being made.
	With the Health and Justice steering group, scope the needs of victims of crime including disability hate crime and gender-based violence in partnership with the GM Gender Based Violence Strategy. This will include prevention measures and cross-referring with existing schemes in GM such as the Safe Places scheme and the Safer Streets Initiative .	Autistic people who have been victims will be able to gain more bespoke support.
	All GM custody suites will receive information on accessible communication and we will work with partners to encourage resources are used.	Autistic people going through custody suites will better understand the process and therefore feel less anxious.
	The Working for Justice group, Keyring, some short training videos for the CJS will be developed with people with lived experience.	Autistic people will meet professionals within the CJS with a better understanding of autism and therefore be treated better.
	Work with the GM Health and Justice Strategy programme lead and group to improve understanding of autism, prevent autistic people being caught up in the CJS and make better reasonable adjustments.	Autistic people in GM will experience more reasonable adjustments within the CJS in GM.

Enablers

The work in GM will be supported by the following enablers:

- The **National Autism Strategy** documents and Implementation plans
- The **Commissioning guidance on diagnosis** developed by Skills for Care
- The NAS Influence and Research team and the NAS Campaigns team

Conclusion

The ambitions of our first GM Autism Strategy have continued in this strategy and we hope that everyone who worked on this first strategy with us for the past three years will continue to work with us on this next strategy, we need you all.

Clearly our work is far from complete and the pandemic has only delayed progress. However, these first three years have reminded us of wealth of expertise, experience and passion out there and we hope that we can make things better for autistic people in Greater Manchester and come to share what an asset autistic people are to our communities and neighbourhoods. For our part, here at GMAC, we will commit to doing better to engage with a wider and more diverse group of autistic people and their families and communities and to keep pushing this strategy forward. We hope you will come with us on this journey, we certainly can't do it without you.

Tim Nicholls, Mari Saeki, Emma Roberts and Abigail Gibson, Greater Manchester Autism Consortium, National Autistic Society.





APPENDIX 1 - PROGRESS MADE UNDER THE LAST STRATEGY

Chapter	What we said we would do	What we have done
Access Making public services including housing and council services more accessible	Share GMAC's Reasonable Adjustment guides with GM Partnership boards to improve accessibility	- Set up a Reasonable Adjustments implementation group for acute settings on May 2019 - GMAC sent out the guides several times. These are also on the website, they are available here
	Create personalised RA profiles	- A card for use in hospital setting is now available here - The NAS Health passport has also been updated in 2020 this can be found here
	NAS to identify places for Autism Friendly Award in GM and develop links with GM Disabled People's Panel and explore issue of concessionary travel passes	- The NAS Autism Friendly Award was paused during the coronavirus pandemic - Links with Disabled People's Panel created through representation of the GMAC Autistic Adult Advisory group on the panel - GMAC and GM Disabled People's Panel have worked on Concessionary travel pass issue with TfGM. This work is still on-going
	Create a Housing Implementation Group	- The Housing Implementation Group was set up in June 2019 and continued throughout the duration of the strategy - Specific guidance on housing developed by the group on eviction and on getting a tenancy, available here - Specific working groups developed on advocacy and eviction in autumn 2021 with a view to developing a business case for an autism housing advocacy service

Chapter	What we said we would do	What we have done
Community To make sure autistic people are part of their communities and able to access support. Includes specifically, those in the criminal justice system as well as diverse communities such as communities experiencing racial inequality, LGBTQI communities, women and older autistic people	Update GMAC website with information and develop documents regarding rights entitlement on the website	• GMAC website has been updated and more work will be done during 2022 • Documents have been developed on rights and entitlement about rights to 16 plus education; support in higher education, access to care act assessment and access to PIP. These are available here
	Set up a Criminal Justice Implementation Group to improve support and understanding	• The Criminal Justice Implementation Group was set up in May 2019 • The implementation group started mapping support organisations available to autistic people and those with a learning disability. This work is still ongoing • An Accessible Information pilot which consisted of the use of easy read and plain English materials and sensory distraction items introduced in Wigan Custody Suite launched September 2021 • A sub-group on prisons was started October 2021 to look at better routes to getting support in prison • Through aligning with the GM Health and Justice Strategy 2020-2025, we brought in additional funding to support co-production and training on exploitation. Members of the group were also involved in the Review of the Mentally Vulnerable Offenders Panel. Members also contributed to a report funded by the Local Government Association on good practice within the CJS in supporting autistic and people with a learning disability
	Strengthen links with CJS services across GM	• Through the Implementation groups and the GM Health and Justice strategy these links have strengthened greatly. The group has members from probation, prisons, CPS, police, a defence lawyer, people with lived experience, health and social care staff, Liaison and Diversion team members, specialist support and university researchers who specialise in the CJS

Chapter	What we said we would do	What we have done
Community	Engage with diverse communities including communities experiencing racial inequalities, LGBTQI communities and women	• GMAC sit on GM Equality Alliance and ran a workshop in April 2021 on engaging with diverse communities to start to build relationships. This work is on-going • GMAC have engaged in the drafting of the GM Gender-based Violence Strategy • GMAC have built relationships with a number of diverse communities in GM and have run workshops for those community groups, including the LGBT Foundation
Health and Support Including ensuring access to diagnosis and post diagnosis support and that health and care staff have appropriate training	Produce lists of duties for partnership boards	• Shared with Partnership boards in 2019/ 2020. These can be found here
	Develop diagnosis service specification for whole of GM	• Specification shared in 2019/2020, but implementation delayed by the coronavirus pandemic and reforms to the NHS • Established a diagnostician working group to share best practice and improve cross-GM collaboration
	Work towards creating autism teams across GM	• Due to Covid and the NHS reforms this was not completed • Ran an event in October 2019
	Host an event to share good practice on post diagnosis support. Based on this develop a business case for a GM post diagnosis offer	• Established two working groups to write a set of post diagnostic standards for Greater Manchester and to agree what a core offer on post diagnosis should be for children and adults • To share the insight developed through diagnosis and post-diagnosis work a successful bid made to NW NHS region due to start July 2022 - January 2024 to support improvement work to the region's support pathways
	Support Training on autism across the region	• GMAC coordinated a GM Autism Training Implementation Group which developed a set of GM Training standards. Those can be found here • GMAC ran a number of 'train the trainer' courses to support capacity in the localities

Chapter	What we said we would do	What we have done
Health and Support	Improve data collection and increase autism diagnosis being included on GP registers	The coronavirus pandemic has had a massive impact on our ability to engage with health. This work has not progressed. However, work nationally in NHS England has begun to improve access to GPs, which the National Autistic Society is influencing to make sure that it better records autism diagnoses in GP records
	To give additional support to autism specific groups across GM. Develop a business case for online support for autistic adults. Work with the National Autistic Society to look into developing a branch in GM.	- The coronavirus pandemic impacted groups being able to run so this was limited - GMAC was successful in getting a business case agreed to develop a monthly virtual group for autistic adults. This has led to the development of the monthly virtual support group for autistic adults due to start in January 2022 - The National Autistic Society branch development was affected by the coronavirus pandemic
	Reasonable Adjustments for health care settings including business case for autism friendly hospitals.	- An Implementation group with a mix of stakeholders was set up in May 2019 and continued throughout the duration of the strategy - Development of a Reasonable Adjustment card. These will be available to download for free from the GMAC website in April 2022 - Work to understand support available to complete health passports and promotion of this - New GMAC web pages on getting reasonable adjustments in acute settings - This business case has not progressed due to the pandemic. There are also new developments via the NHS LTP and the OMMT. In response to the coronavirus pandemic all the parent seminars were transferred onto online formats. This did not include the Carer's Resilience Group because of the staff team's capacity being reduced and need to focus on getting other seminars online during the pandemic. GMAC has also been given additional funding to extend the parent seminars to diverse communities across GM

Chapter	What we said we would do	What we have done
Health and Support	Increase the number and reach of GMAC parent seminars	• GMAC has trained three staff to deliver the NAS Teenage Life programme to support more parents whose autistic children are going through transition to adulthood. The first session will be delivered in early 2022 thanks to some funding from the GM Learning Disability and Autism Children and Young People's board
Employment and Transition All autistic people and their family members given the right information to prepare for adulthood and access support to find and maintain work including from employers	Share information about statutory duties in relation to Transition	• Shared in 2019. Information for families can be found here and information for autism partnership boards here
	Promote the Growing up with Autism in GM resources.	• Also shared with the GM Autism Delivery group members 2019/2020. They are available here
	Develop GMAC Transition workshop materials and run pilot sessions	• Two pilots took place in September 2019 and February 2020 • When the pandemic started, the materials were put online and a virtual set of seminars are available here
	Establish a Transition Implementation Group with multiple partners	• The Transition Implementation Group was set up in May 2019 and has continued throughout the duration of the strategy. Membership includes commissioners, education staff, transition social workers, parents, autistic adults, education psychologists and social care managers • The Implementation group developed the GM Autism transition template which can be found here
	Develop a resource for autistic children and young people without an EHCP	• A template resource has been developed. It is being piloted in seven Greater Manchester schools and colleges from summer 2021 to spring 2022 and will be evaluated by the University of Manchester in 2022-2023

Chapter	What we said we would do	What we have done
Employment and Transition	GMAC will work with children's services to extend the strategy to children and make it an all-age strategy	The publication of the national autism strategy for children, young people 2021-2026 has given us opportunities to extend the next GM strategy to be all-age. Work is underway to engage with leaders and partners in GM children's services and system
	GMAC will work with the GM Employment charter to promote autistic people's employment. Establish an Employment Implementation Group, identify gaps and develop a business case	- Links made and in Spring 2021 GMAC published a blog in the GM Employment charter newsletter - An Employment Implementation Group was set up in May 2019 and continued throughout the duration of the strategy - The Implementation Group decided to develop a set of positive messages about the strengths of autistic people and people with a learning disability in the workplace. This led to the GM Enabling Employment Campaign between January 2020 and August 2020 and included 11 films and 4 blogs, They can be found here - Following the campaign, engagement with three of the employers who had contributed to the campaign agreed to form the GM Neurodiversity and Learning Disability Employer Network in October 2020. This network is growing and will support other employers in GM. Terms of Reference for this group can be found here - A sub group of the Implementation Group was formed to develop an Autistic Entrepreneur network. Work is underway to develop this in partnership with the GM Chamber of Commerce during 2022



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