

Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub- Committee Supplementary Agenda



5. Croydon's Autism Strategy 2021-24 (Pages 3 - 12)

For the Sub-Committee to consider an early draft of Croydon's Autism Strategy 2021-24, with a view to providing feedback that can be taken into account during the preparation of the final version.

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A strategy for an autism-friendly Croydon

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The big picture

- The National Autism Strategy, Think Autism, was created in 2014
- This is due to be revised at some point in 2021, TBC
- Understanding of autism, from a scientific / medical point of view, is improving all the time
- The number of known autistic residents, and the associated costs to councils, has risen in every London borough, and to a lesser extent, nationally too
- 85% of autistic people do not work full-time but most want to

Why are we doing this?

- Around one in 40-60 people are autistic
- Autism is a neurological condition – the brain is wired differently
- Every autistic person is different but almost all face challenges specifically because of their autism
- We want to show our support for our autistic community
- We recognise that we, and our partners, have to do more
- This work is led by our Autism Partnership Board (*explain*)

Croydon's Autism Strategy - process

- This is non-statutory – we don't have to do it but many councils are, and it is considered good practice to do so
- We consulted widely with the public and relevant professionals. The views of well over 500 people were taken into consideration
- Based on this, we amended our initial priorities, and added new ones. A full draft was then produced
- A “Working Party” group – comprised mainly of autistic people and / or family members – meets regularly to look at the work in more detail
- We intend to aim for approval by Cabinet in May, and also gain sign-off from our other partners including Health bodies, etc.

Croydon's Autism Strategy - aims

- The document provided is very much a work in progress version
- It is intended to be easily understood by members of the public, and people who are not especially knowledgeable about autism, but also to capture the concerns and set out the goals of those who are autistic
- We want to work in partnership to make Croydon as autism-friendly as possible and to make it easier for our autistic residents to live their lives as they wish
- Importantly, we want to raise awareness and understanding about autism, so that more public places, workplaces, professionals and members of the public know what helps – and what doesn't.

Croydon's Autism Strategy - content

- The document is split into three main areas –
 - Improving the support we offer
 - Improving our community
 - Improving equality
- Each of these areas contains a number of priorities, and there is a page about each priority, explaining why it matters and what we will do
- There will also be some case studies from autistic individuals who have had differing experiences, and a detailed action plan, to follow, will outline timescales and targets for this programme of work

Next steps

- We have a couple more weeks to make any further changes to the document, and then 3-4 weeks during the cabinet process when we are likely to make further changes
- We will be working with council staff and other key partners to ensure sign-off by all relevant local organisations, and will also start to work on the detailed action plan during this period
- The Working Party will meet at least one more time during this period, and group members will have the chance to consider what role they want to take once the strategy has been signed off
- The strategy will be published online*
- We intend to have a formal launch event for the strategy in early July, by which point we should have started working on implementing the action plan

You can help by...

- Asking any questions you have – there are no silly questions, and no-one is born knowing anything about autism
- Learning more about it – the more you understand, the more you can help
- Talking about autism - in meetings, in your day jobs, with friends – keep raising awareness and understanding
- **THINK AUTISM!** – when making decisions, what will the impact be on autistic residents? What can we do that might make that impact more manageable?
- Come back to me afterwards if there's anything else I can help you with.

Any questions – about the strategy,
or about autism generally?

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