



Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027 consultation

Open date: 24 July 2023

Close date: 24 September 2023

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Overview

We want to hear your views on our draft strategy to better support autistic people.

If you are a young person, or know a young person who would like to tell us their views on the strategy, see our young people's survey at buckinghamshire.gov.uk/youth-voice-autism

Around 1.1% of people in the UK aged 5 years and over is autistic. In Buckinghamshire this is about 5,400 children, young people and adults.

Autistic people in Buckinghamshire have told us that they want to:

- live as independently as possible
- have the same opportunities and experiences as everyone else
- use the services they need when they need them
- work with us to change our policies, approach and services

This is our vision too.

Draft Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027

Our autism strategy sets out what we need to do to make this vision happen. It includes 5 equally important priorities:

- improving awareness and understanding of autism
- tackling health and care inequalities
- developing a needs-based approach – so that autistic children and young people get the best start in life

- developing better support for employment and meaningful activities
- ensuring more autistic adults maintain their independence

These priorities come from what autistic people have told us. They also cover national and local strategies.

Each priority has some areas of focus. These are what we need to do to make the priority, and the strategy vision, happen.

Tell us what you think of the areas of focus and if there's anything else we should be focusing on.

We want to hear from:

- autistic people, their families, friends, work colleagues, employers
- anyone whose professional work involves the care, support or education of autistic people

What autism is

Being autistic does not mean you have an illness or disease. It means your brain works in a different way from other people.

Autism affects each person in different ways. It affects how you:

- process information, perceive the world around you and make sense of your place in it
- communicate, relate to and interact with others

If you're autistic, you're autistic your whole life.

How the strategy has been developed

We have developed this strategy with autistic people, their families and support networks:

- **stakeholder scoping meetings**
 - we worked with partner organisations and autistic people to help develop priorities

- **Talkback engagement project**
 - we asked Talkback UK to run surveys and workshops to find out what professionals, autistic people and their families thought of current services
- **youth engagement**
 - we ran surveys to hear from autistic children and young people

More information about how we have developed the draft Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027 (PDF SIZE).

Related documents

Before you respond to this consultation, please have a look at the following documents at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/autism-strategy](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/autism-strategy):

- Draft Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027
- Easy Read draft Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027
- Talkback Community Feedback Report August 2022

Online events to find out more

We are running online events for you to ask questions about our new autism strategy. The events are the same, join the one that starts at the best time for you.

The events are happening between 1 August and 12 September 2023.

They are all open to anyone and there is no need to book. You just need to join at the time the event starts using one of the links at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/autism-strategy](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/autism-strategy).

If you need any reasonable adjustments to take part, or if you would prefer a 1:1 meeting, please email us at autismstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

How to have your say

You can tell us your views in one of the following ways:

- complete the online survey at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/autism-strategy](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/autism-strategy)
- complete, and return, a printed version of the survey
- complete, and return, an Easy Read version of the survey

- email us at autismstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- write to us at Tom Beaven, All Age Disability Team, Buckinghamshire Council, Walton Street Offices, Aylesbury, HP20 1UA

If you would like this consultation in another format or language, or if you have any questions, please:

- email us at autismstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- phone us on 07971 981992

Please tell us your views by midnight on Sunday 24 September 2023.

What happens next

Your views will help us check and update the draft Autism Strategy. We will tell you what we did because of your feedback.

Decision makers will then look at the strategy for approval. We aim to launch the Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy by the end of 2023.

A group of staff, organisations and autistic people will put together action plans and lead on making the strategy's vision happen.

The strategy and action plans will change as the needs of autistic people change.

Privacy

We will use the information you provide here only for this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details. For more information about data and privacy, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have questions about data and privacy, please email us on dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Or write to our Data Protection Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF.

Printed consultation survey

Our vision

Our vision is that Buckinghamshire is a place where autistic people can:

- live as independently as possible
- have the same opportunities and experiences as everyone else
- use the services they need when they need them
- work with us to change our policies, approach and services

Making this vision happen will mean:

- autistic people will feel more welcome, listened to and understood by our staff and the wider community
- health and social care inequalities will be reduced and wait times for an assessment will go down
- autistic children and young people will be better supported with their needs so that they get the best start in life
- more autistic people will be supported into employment and meaningful activities
- more autistic adults will maintain their independence and remain in the community

1. Do you agree with our vision for the Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

2. Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

If you think we could improve the vision, please tell us how.

Improving awareness and understanding of autism

Our ambition

This priority is about making sure:

- autistic people feel more welcome, listened to and understood by our staff and across Buckinghamshire
- the understanding and acceptance of autism are improved
- our staff understand how autism can affect people differently, including the difference in how autistic women and girls present, and to help change people's behaviour towards autistic people and their families
- autistic people can access our spaces and services, just like everyone else

Areas of focus

What we need to do to improve awareness and understanding of autism:

- improve our own awareness and understanding – we will focus on this first
- autistic people training all frontline police officers and staff in autism awareness
- Youth Offending Service offer 1:1 support to autistic people, or people suspected of being autistic, on probation and post-release
- autism awareness training for parents of teenagers as well as younger children
- review the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) local offer website and other online directories to be more accessible for autistic people and their families and support network

3. Do you think these are the right areas of focus for improving awareness and understanding of autism?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

4. Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

If you think there are any other areas of focus for this priority, please tell us here.

5. If you have any other comments about ‘improving awareness and understanding of autism’, please tell us here:

Tackling health and care inequalities

Autistic people have told us that they don’t always get the same health and care support as people who are not autistic.

Tackling health and care inequalities is about making sure everyone has the same access to health and care services when they need them.

Our ambition

This priority is about making sure:

- we reduce the health and care inequalities autistic people face and show that autistic people are living healthier lives
- we reduce waiting times for high quality autism assessments, improve our diagnostic pathways and the support that autistic people need
- physical and emotional wellbeing is promoted through prevention and community services – reducing reliance on health services
- we review current and future housing needs to ensure Buckinghamshire has more housing and housing related support
- getting a diagnosis will better link with our education offer, support services and health offer

- accessing services and support is not always dependent on receiving a diagnosis

Areas of focus

What we need to do to tackle health and care inequalities:

- invest in our assessment and diagnostic services
- hospitals collect information to better deliver services
- health organisations working together across Berkshire West, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire to develop different approaches to diagnosis
- education takes a needs-led approach, moving away from the assessment model – this will mean it is less critical to receive a diagnosis to get support
- working with health organisations to fund services with a best practice, needs led and earliest intervention approach

6. Do you think these are the right areas of focus for tackling health and care inequalities?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

7. Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

If you think there are any other areas of focus for this priority, please tell us here.

8. If you have any other comments about ‘tackling health and care inequalities’, please tell us here:

Developing a needs-based approach – so that autistic children and young people get the best start in life

Not all autistic people want or have a formal diagnosis – but may still need support.

A needs-based approach means that education, social care, and health services are for anyone who needs them – whether they have diagnosis or not.

Some services in Buckinghamshire will still need a diagnosis (diagnosis led) as their support is linked to national guidance rather than local guidance.

Our ambition

This priority is about making sure:

- autistic people can get education support with or without a diagnosis
- education and school staff are trained to understand autism and how to better support needs (including differences in behaviour and environmental need)
- fewer autistic people experience emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) – difficulty attending school due to emotional reasons
- autistic people and their families feel prepared for adulthood – whether they get a job, go into further education, or look for other opportunities

Areas of focus

What we need to do to develop a needs-based approach:

- change how autistic children access education support (needs rather than diagnosis led)

- start Autism Standards Training for all schools across Buckinghamshire – outlining best practice support for autistic young people
- publish a new Therapies Strategy – to meet the needs of children and young people who need speech and language, communication and occupational therapy
- making changes to physical environments to meet the needs of autistic people
- create a new, accessible Preparation for Adulthood Toolkit – to support families and professionals as autistic children and young people become adults

9. Do you think these are the right areas of focus for developing a needs-based approach?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

10. Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

If you think there are any other areas of focus for this priority, please tell us here.

11. If you have any other comments about 'developing a needs-based approach', please tell us here:

Developing better support for employment and meaningful activities

Our ambition

This priority is about making sure:

- autistic people have more opportunities to work in areas where their skills are a 'good fit'
- autistic people understand work, training, and volunteering opportunities – so they can make decisions about their future
- people offering advice and support have more awareness and understanding of reasonable adjustments and employer responsibilities
- more employers understand what autistic people can do and provide work or volunteering opportunities

Areas of focus

What we need to do to develop better support for employment and meaningful activities:

- we will work with employment and training support to improve the quality and amount of support offered by:
 - improving our Preparing for Adulthood offer
 - launching the Reasonable Adjustments Toolkit for our staff and health colleagues – which promotes and sets good practice
- work with the local job centres to share opportunities and have more Disability Confident employers
- encourage local businesses to attend autism related events and training to enhance their skills

12. Do you think these are the right areas of focus for developing better support for employment and meaningful activities?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

13. Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

If you think there are any other areas of focus for this priority, please tell us here.

14. If you have any other comments about ‘developing better support for employment and meaningful activities’, please tell us here:

Ensuring more autistic adults maintain their independence

Our ambition

This priority is about making sure:

- we work with autistic people and stakeholders to address gaps in our current support

Areas of focus

What we need to do to ensure more autistic adults maintain their independence:

- address the social support gap for autistic adults – autistic adults who do not have associated care needs have told us about difficulties accessing social support services
- evaluate support for autistic people with and without social care support – including online and / or in-person ‘drop ins’
- work with health partners to deliver reasonable adjustments across services and settings
- look at how to improve specialist housing

15. Do you think these are the right areas of focus for ensuring more autistic adults maintain their independence?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

16. Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

If you think there are any other areas of focus for this priority, please tell us here.

17. If you have any other comments about 'ensuring more autistic adults maintain their independence', please tell us here:

Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027

18. How easy was it to understand the draft Autism Strategy?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Not very easy
- Not at all easy
- I don't know

If you think we could make the Autism Strategy easier to understand, please tell us how:

19.If you have any other comments about the draft Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027, please tell us here:

About you

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details.

20.Which of the following describe you?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- I live in Buckinghamshire
- I work in Buckinghamshire
- I study in Buckinghamshire
- I represent or own a business in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a community or voluntary group in Buckinghamshire
- I am an elected representative in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire
- I work for Buckinghamshire Council
- Other (please give details below):

21. Do any of the following describe you?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- I am an autistic person
- I am responding on behalf of an autistic person
- I am a parent / carer of an autistic person
- I am a family member / friend of an autistic person
- I am a professional who works with or supports autistic people
- None of the above

22. How did you find out about this consultation?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Local media (newspaper, radio or TV)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Nextdoor
- Email from Buckinghamshire Council
- Buckinghamshire Council website or Your Voice Bucks website
- Buckinghamshire Council newsletter
- From Buckinghamshire Council staff
- Through working at Buckinghamshire Council
- Poster
- Word of mouth
- Local Community Board
- Local Councillor
- Local Parish / Town Council
- Other (please give details below):

23. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a business or a voluntary group)?

Please tick (✓) one option

- As an individual (go to question 25)
- On behalf of an organisation

On behalf of an organisation

24. Please provide the following details:

Name of organisation:

Your job title:

End of survey if responding on behalf of an organisation

More about you

We want to hear from as many people as possible to understand the views and needs across Buckinghamshire. The following questions help us see if the communities we serve have had the opportunity to be heard through this activity.

All questions are optional. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer, or you can skip all the questions.

25. What is your postcode?

We want to understand the views of people living in different areas. You don't have to provide your postcode, but it helps us plan and make considered decisions.

26.What is your age?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different age groups.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- Over 85
- Prefer not to say

27.Do you consider yourself to have a disability / disabilities, impairment(s) or long term health condition(s)?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of disabled people, people with impairments and people with long term health conditions.

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Disability / disabilities
- Impairment(s)
- Long term health condition(s)
- No
- Prefer not to say

28.Are you:

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different sexes.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

29. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different ethnicities.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Asian - British
- Asian - Bangladeshi
- Asian - Chinese
- Asian - Indian
- Asian - Pakistani
- Any other Asian background - Please give details below
- Black - African
- Black - British
- Black - Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background - Please give details below
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic backgrounds British
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background - Please give details below
- White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or English traveller
- White - Irish Traveller
- White - European
- Any other White background - Please give details below
- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Other ethnic group - Arab British
- Other ethnic group - Please give details below
- Prefer not to say

Please give other details here:

End of the survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return your completed survey by midnight on **Sunday 24 September 2023**. You can:

- email it to autismstrategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- post it to Tom Beaven, All Age Disability Team, Buckinghamshire Council, Walton Street Offices, Aylesbury, HP20 1UA