

Community Partnership Group (CPG)

Autism

Terms of Reference

Autism Overview

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition characterised by challenges with social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviours. Each person with autism is unique, with varying strengths and needs.

Purpose of the CPG

The role of the Autism Partnership Group (CPG) is to act as a critical friend. Assisting in the development, co-production and monitoring of services and support delivered to Autistic people across Central Bedfordshire.

Key Responsibilities

To include:

1. Monitoring the impact of local and national legislation on services.
2. Reviewing and supporting delivery of the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Autism Strategy. See below link for SEND strategy which covers children and young people up to 25 years of age. This draft strategy is new and currently under consultation.
[centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/sites/Communications/Website and intranet/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FCommunications%2FWebsite and intranet%2FWebsite Documents%2FAbout your council%2FConsultations%2FSEND strategy%2FDraft SEND Strategy 25-28%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FCommunications%2FWebsite and intranet%2FWebsite Documents%2FAbout your council%2FConsultations%2FSEND strategy&p=true&ga=1](https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/sites/Communications/Website%20and%20intranet/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FCommunications%2FWebsite%20and%20intranet%2FWebsite%2FDocuments%2FAbout%20your%20council%2FConsultations%2FSEND%20strategy%2FDraft%20SEND%20Strategy%2025-28%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FCommunications%2FWebsite%20and%20intranet%2FWebsite%2FDocuments%2FAbout%20your%20council%2FConsultations%2FSEND%20strategy&p=true&ga=1)

The current CBC Strategy for adults with Autism is dated (2011) with no recent replacement publicly listed. However, please see below link for the BLMK Learning Disability and Autism Strategy 2023-2026

bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk/our-publications/strategies/blmk-learning-disability-and-autism-strategy-easy-read-version/?layout=file

3. Acting as a voice for Autistic people in wider forums and ensuring their views are communicated effectively.
4. Promoting inclusion of under-represented groups.
5. Evaluating commissioned services and providing constructive feedback.
6. Ensuring Autistic people and their representatives receive clear communication and outcomes from their engagement.
7. Working collaboratively with the Carers and Learning Disabilities Boards to identify shared issues and develop solutions.

Board members

1. The Autism Partnership Group will comprise:
 - a. Full members who attend and participate fully in board meetings.
 - b. At least 50% of participants will be individuals with Autism or direct representatives of someone with Autism.
 - c. Representatives from appropriate voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSE).
 - d. Appropriate Statutory Services representatives (by invitation).
2. Members will remain on the Autism Partnership Group for a term of two years. The CPG will review membership on an annual basis; however, members will be removed from the Board after three consecutively missed meetings without notification.
3. The Autism Partnership Group values the lived experience of all Autistic individuals and their representatives. It is acknowledged that insights gained through all lived experience remains meaningful and relevant, regardless of whether the individual is currently in a caregiving role. Therefore, representatives of individuals with Autism are eligible to hold a substantive position on the Board, ensuring that a broad range of perspectives informs the Group's decision-making.

Chair

1. The CPG will agree on a Chair and Vice-Chair made up of representatives who have put themselves forward to participate.
2. The role of the Chair is to facilitate the smooth running of meetings and ensure that the views of all members are listened to and given due consideration.
3. The Vice-Chair supports the Chair in their duties and stands in when the Chair is unavailable. The Vice-Chair helps ensure meetings run smoothly, encourages participation from all members, and assists with administrative and organisational tasks as required.

Representatives of individuals with Autism

1. Representatives of Autistic individuals are invited to attend as 'experts by experience'. These may be representatives of young people and/or adults. Representatives bring their own awareness of relevant issues. They may have links with local Autism networks, but they are not invited as formal representatives of these networks.
2. Representatives from organisations that work with Autistic people and represent their views are also invited to attend as service representatives.

Voluntary and Community Sector and Statutory Service Representatives

1. Are expected to attend CPG meetings on invitation and participate fully. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they should send notification at the earliest opportunity and if possible, arrange for a substitute to attend on their behalf.
2. These members are required to take responsibility and use their networks and links to Autistic individuals and their representatives, to support voice and consultation activities when required.
3. Representatives of Central Bedfordshire Council will be expected to follow up on issues and queries raised and provide feedback to the CPG.

Prospective new members

Any member of the CPG can introduce a prospective new member by putting them in touch with the CPG Lead at HWCB. They will then meet with the Chair and HWCB CPG Lead who will give an overview of the work of the CPG.

Frequency and Agendas

1. The initial launch meeting will take place before the end of November 2025. Two further meetings are planned for 2026, provisionally scheduled for April and September.
2. Extraordinary meetings can be called by any of the group members, in consultation with all other members with agreement by the Chair.
3. The agenda is usually set well in advance.
4. Any member of the group may suggest future agenda items.
5. Agendas will be sent out to members at least 2 weeks before each meeting.

Reporting/Governance

1. The CPG will report information back to CBC after each CPG meeting in addition to an annual report demonstrating service delivery achievements over a 12-month period.
2. The CPG will also hear feedback about issues relating to Autism and ensure that this feedback is passed to the relevant people and, in turn, any response will be fed back to the Autism CPG.
3. The CPG will feedback on, and report to its members, on any local and national initiatives affecting Autistic people.

Communications

1. There will be a single point of contact for the CPG: Victoria Bloxham, HWCB Engagement & Volunteer Officer & CPG Lead. Telephone 0300 3038554/ Email: info@healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk
2. Minutes of meetings can be found on the HWCB website once they have been approved.
3. Members will be asked how they wish to receive all communications – by email or post.
4. Members will be asked if they have any additional support needs to enable them to participate fully in meetings.

Lifespan of the Terms of Reference

1. The CPG will review the Terms of Reference annually unless an incident occurs that requires the terms to be reviewed sooner.
2. **These Terms of Reference were agreed on: 5th November 2025**
3. **They will be reviewed on: November 2026**