

Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Panel – 15th September 2025

Questions to the Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Question:

How is co-production of the Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity framework taking place especially as relates to supported living services supporting people with very complex needs? How does this include parents/carers who are advocates, appointees and deputies? This co-production is imperative given that B&NES Council do not have an up-to-date autism strategy and no learning disability strategy.

How will meaningful consultation take place on this Framework and what are the timescales for this in light of recommissioning of services in 2026?

How is co-production taking place and how are parents/carers who are advocates, appointees and deputies being involved in the recommissioning of services in 2026 and what are the timescales for this?

How will the commissioning process ensure that the commissioned services meet the needs of all service users, including supported living service users with profound learning disability, non-verbal autism and complex health care needs?

Having been through a change of service provider previously, if the service provider changes, how will the significant resource required to support the service user as they transition from one provider to another be given? It takes at least 6 months for the new service provider to be up and running to provide support and understand a service user with very complex needs. In our experience, you lose most of your current staff who know the service user well and safeguarding risks increase significantly. How are these and further considerations being thought through? This is now also in the context of service reductions both in the local authority and the ICB – e.g. no social workers knowing the service user, no occupational therapy support etc.

Response:

We welcome these suggestions and will use them to inform the council's approach to recommissioning. As highlighted in the Lead member's report (agenda item 8), several B&NES families using respite care are keen to continue to work with the council on shaping future services. The respite working group will continue and invitations to families explaining next set of opportunities to take part will be sent later in September.

Alongside the work on developing a new all-age respite offer, officers are bringing together initial information required to develop a new framework to commission services for people with a learning disability, autistic people, or neurodivergent people. Voice of experience, parents and advocates will be at the centre of this work, including voice of people currently drawing on care and support and of people who might need it in the future. Work on developing the new framework is being progressed in September-October. We will update the panel on the approach and timeline at a future meeting.

Regarding the suggestion indicating a decrease in the number of Social Workers and Occupational Therapists (OTs) within the local authority. Contrary to this suggestion, I am pleased to share that Adult Social Care (ASC) has invested in increasing the number of Social Workers and OTs.

This positive development is clearly evidenced by the report presented to the Health and Well Being Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, specifically in item 10 of the ASC improvement update. The investment reflects our commitment to strengthening our workforce and enhancing the quality of care and support we provide to our community.