

Surrey Adults Autism Partnership Board Meeting



Meeting held on 16 October 2025 on Teams

Welcome and Introductions

Tom welcomed people to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves and their roles.

Actions from Last Meeting

- Get more information about police disability group: Amanda has received the terms of reference from the police, email Amanda if interested in joining so there is a link with the All-Age Autism Strategy.
- GDPR Survey: 58 members are still pending - Amanda to send the final reminder and if there is no reply, members will be removed from the list in line with GDPR regulations.

Prisons Project Presentation

Key Points Discussed:

- Role of Neurodiversity Support Managers
- High prevalence of neurodivergence in prisons
- Development of training and booklet for staff and prisoners
- Challenges faced by neurodivergent prisoners

Discussion:

Mike explained that every prison in England and Wales now has one neurodiversity support manager. These managers help neurodivergent prisoners by creating simple support plans that explain their needs. They also help prisoners get assessments and guide prison staff on how to support them. Because each prison only has one neurodiversity support manager, they often train neurodivergent prisoners to become peer advocates who can support others and help with writing support plans. This peer support has been especially valuable in both Downview and High Down prisons.

Mike explained that around half of the people in prison are believed to be neurodivergent, which is much higher than in the general population. This includes conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and others. Many prisoners arrive without a

diagnosis and may not realise they are neurodivergent. He also mentioned that neurodivergence can be acquired through things like brain injury, trauma, or substance misuse. These factors, combined with the challenges of the prison environment, make it especially important to understand and support neurodivergent individuals in custody.

Mike said that a booklet is being created to help prisoners and staff understand neurodivergence in a simple and clear way. It explains things like sensory issues, communication differences, and how to manage stress in prison. It also encourages prisoners to ask for a support plan that helps staff know how to meet their needs. The booklet is still being tested in two prisons and will be printed for all Surrey prisons once it's finished, with plans to share it more widely across the country.

Gul said that prisons should have special areas just for autistic adults. These areas would be separated from the rest of the prison, and staff working there should be trained to understand autism. This would help reduce stress and sensory overload, which can be made worse by noisy and chaotic prison environments. She gave an example of someone who was wrongly placed in a regular prison but improved a lot after being moved to a more suitable setting following an autism diagnosis.

Mike said that some UK prisons, like Pentonville, do have special wings for neurodivergent people and even include basic sensory rooms. However, these spaces are small and not always ideal.

Stephen confirmed that Pentonville has a wing for neurodivergent prisoners, but it still has problems like noise from other parts of the prison. Other prisons are trying similar ideas, but it's hard to make them work because of issues like space, staff shortages, and safety concerns, especially when different types of prisoners are mixed together. He said that although there has been progress, such as hiring neurodiversity support managers, prisons are still very challenging places for neurodivergent people.

Kai spoke about how hard it is for neurodivergent people to move in and out of prison. If someone ended up in prison because their neurodivergence wasn't understood or supported, then they will need proper help after release to avoid going back. Just giving them resources isn't enough, and they need clear guidance and support to adjust to life outside prison. This is especially important because of past trauma and the big difference between prison and community life. A planned and supported transition is key to helping them stay well and stable.

Mike agreed and said that sending someone back to the same environment they came from can lead to the same problems. It's important to connect released prisoners with community services that support autistic and neurodivergent people. When someone understands their neurodivergence, they can build a better life after prison and reduce the chance of reoffending.

BREAK

Surrey Heartlands Update

Key Points Discussed:

- Overview of team roles and responsibilities
- Dynamic Support Register and care planning
- Commissioned services including Brain in Hand
- Health inequalities and cross-boundary service gaps

Discussion

Tom highlighted the lack of support for autistic people without a learning disability, especially in crisis situations and mentioned CETRAs (Community Education Treatment Reviews) as part of support. He emphasised the need to include feedback from the Reference Group and stressed that suicide among autistic people is a serious issue needing long-term focus and action.

Wendy raised concerns about Frimley Health & Care not offering support to someone in crisis and questioned how the system ensures support is available. She pointed out that if there's a problem in Frimley, it's likely also a problem in Surrey Heartlands and asked if there's an equivalent to Brain in Hand in Frimley.

Kai asked about the progress of the Health Inequalities Board and mentioned living on the boundary with Frimley and not seeing improvements in mental health or autism services, highlighting the importance of local responsibility for services.

Sabrina added to Kai's point about postcode differences affecting access to services, and that it's hard to support autistic people when access depends on which street they live on.

Summary of Actions

- Email Amanda if interested in joining the police disability group All

- Send final reminder for GDPR survey to members AA
- Provide an example of a neurodivergence support plan ML
- Speak to the mental health commissioner about gaps in support FB
- Check if Brain in Hand is available in Frimley and Hampshire FB
- Raise GP service disparities regarding postcode-based service access and the need for restructuring FB

Next Meeting Date

10am to 12.30pm on Thursday 22 January 2026

Attendees

Co-chairs:

- Tom Moore – Senior Commissioning Manager, Surrey County Council
- Kai Worgan

Board members:

- Alice Ryan – Learning Disability Nurse, Surrey and Borders NHS Trust
- Amanda Aldridge – Engagement Partnership Officer, Surrey County Council
- Fi Bovino – Transformation Lead, NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB
- Debbie Overton – Senior Business Support Assistant, Surrey County Council (notes)
- Camilla Ford - Workforce Programme Manager, NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB
- Stephen Haynes – Neurodiversity Lead Clinician, HMP High Down, Central and Northwest London NHS Foundation Trust
- Hayward Drake - Co-chair of the Autism Reference group & Treasurer for the Surrey branch of the National Autistic Society
- Emma Langdon – Disability Employment Officer, Camberley Job Centre
- Martin Woodward – Surrey Choices Employability Team
- Melanie Randall – Care Practice Advisor, Surrey County Council
- Natalie Main – Occupational Therapist, Surrey County Council
- Sara Truman – National Autistic Society
- Wendy Smith – Autism Friendly Communities, Autism Reference Group
- Yasmin Broome – Involvement Lead, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
- Gul Collis – Residential Manager, National Autistic Society

- Christina Earl – Head of Innovation and Business Development, Surrey Choices
- Chris Lane – Avenues Group
- Parvin Ahmed – Mary Frances Trust
- Caitlyn Larnyoh - All-Age Autism Strategy, Surrey County Council
- Christine Malik – National Autistic Society
- Sabrina Peters – All-Age Autism Strategy, Surrey County Council

Presenters:

- Mike Leat – Autism by Experience
- Matt Holton – Autism by Experience and Reference Group member
- Fi Bovino – NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB

Supporting:

- Marion Quemby - NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB (BSL interpreter)
- Carrie Moorhouse - NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB (BSL interpreter)