NORFOLK AUTISM PARTNERSHIP

Notes from the Autism Norfolk Forum

Held on: Tuesday 28/07/2026 18:00-19:00

Venue: Zoom Meeting

Please note: These notes represent an overview summary of this meeting rather than a verbatim transcript.

NORFOLK AUTISM PARTNERSHIP

Meeting Notes

Agenda Item	Welcome & Introduction	Action and Due Date
1.1	Welcome and introductions made. Communication prompts posted to the Zoom Chat window, and their use explained. No reasonable adjustments were requested. Meeting rules where explained	

Agenda Item	Norfolk Autism Partnership Board Update	Action and Due Date
2.1	Lee Gibbons (Partnership Coordinator) gave an update on the activities of the Autism Partnership Board Since the last Forum. These included: • Year 2 Progress and Year 3 Actions • Now That's What I Call Autism! 2026 • Working Group Updates • The Autism Norfolk Directory	
2.2	<u>Year 2 Progress and Year 3 Actions</u> • Good progress is being made in all areas of the Year 2 action plan, and many actions are on track to be completed. • There have been some challenges with partners especially during restructures of organisations, but we have commitment that they will engage fully again once at full capacity. • Action owners have been asked to tell us about their plans for year 3	

	• In January 2027 we will be holding a forum to update our wider membership on progress and what has been achieved. • The Norfolk Oversight Strategy group continues to monitor this and the Year 1 & 2 Plans as well as the year 1 Progress update can be vied on the NAPM Website under The Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy 2024-2029 webpage	
2.3	<u>Now That's What I Call Autism! 2026</u> • The event was held on the 23rd April 2026 at the Forum, Norwich 11:00 - 15:00 • We had a approximate attendance of 4250 people with around 500 watching the talks / speaker sessions • The event is a day to celebrate autistic identity, creativity and community. • Next years event is planned for Saturday 10th April 2027 11:00 -15:00 at the Forum A full report of the event can be read by clicking here	

2.4	<u>Working Group Updates</u>
	
	• <u>Diagnostic Working Group</u>
	  ○ This group is currently on pause due to the Integrated Care Board restructure
	  ○ Norfolk and Suffolk ICB have said they are committed to attending the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board from September 2026 and are committed to reinstating waiting time reporting once fully established.	

	• <u>Norfolk Autism Strategy Oversight Group</u>
	  ○ The NASOPG continues to monitor the progress updates from partners and escalate any concerns to the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board
	  ○ They have also noted to areas of good or outstanding progress, these were given to the NAPB for the Now That's What I Call Autism! 2026 Event and the Local Area Inclusion Plan for exceeding their target on SEND Audits
	
	• <u>Young People Autism Advisory Group</u>
	  ○ The Young Person Autism Advisory group has met twice since the last Autism Norfolk Forum.
	  ○ We have discussed their worries and challenges in education and the transitions to adulthood what support is available and what to do if they are struggling
	  ○ Their feedback is given raised at the NAPB
	
	• <u>Support Pathways Working Group</u>
	  ○ Since the last Autism Norfolk Forum this group has looked at support for Autistic people.
	  ○ We have discussed and updated the Norfolk Autism Directory and begun looking at the structure and criteria for an Autism Kitemark.
	  ○ Next the group will be reviewing the Quick Reference Guides	

2.5	<u>The Autism Norfolk Directory</u>
	
	• The Autism Support Pathways working group have looked at and refreshed the Autism Norfolk Directory
	• We have created guides for Organisations and one-off events as well as adding in additional features:
	  ○ A saved listing page
	  ○ Direct messaging for organisations	

	○ More robust reviewing of organisation ○ Automatic reminders to review and update information ○ Options to print off or email yourself the details of the what's on page by month or per event. • Since the relaunch approximately 2 months ago we now have: ○ 28 listed organisations ○ 28 regular events on the What's On calendar The Autism Norfolk Directory can be viewed by visiting: https://directory.norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk/	
2.6	There were no further comments on questions on the update	

Agenda Item	Have Your Say: Autism Support	Action and Due Date
3.1	**Engagement Sessions** • This was one of three opportunities for people to contribute their views. • The same information and questions were being covered at each session. • Attendees did not need to attend more than one event. • Feedback from people attending multiple sessions would only be recorded and considered once. • All contributions would help shape the development of this work. • Sessions covered: ○ Why an Autism Kitemark is being explored. ○ Who is involved in developing the proposals. ○ What people have said about their experiences of autism support. ○ The proposed Autism Quality Measures. ○ Whether the proposed measures reflect people's experiences of support.	

3.2	**Background to the Autism Kitemark**
	
	• Autistic people helped develop the Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy 2024–2029 in 2023.
	• During the strategy development, people suggested introducing a kitemark to recognise organisations that support autistic people well.
	• The Norfolk Autism Partnership Board established the Norfolk Autism Support Pathways Group.
	• The group includes six autistic adults and is supported by:
	  ○ The Autism Commissioning Manager.
	  ○ The Norfolk Autism Partnership Co-ordinator.
	• The group was asked to explore:
	  ○ Whether autistic people still believe an Autism Kitemark would be helpful.
	  ○ People's experiences of autism support during the previous two years.	

3.3	**Consultation and Survey** • The group designed and tested an online questionnaire and an accessible workbook. • The survey was launched at the Now That's What I Call Autism! 2026 event at The Forum in Norwich. • People attending the event were also invited to share their experiences in person. • The survey opened on Thursday 23 April 2026 and remained open for four weeks. • It took approximately 15 to 25 minutes to complete.	

3.4	**Survey Participation**
	
	• A total of 67 people completed the survey.
	• Of those respondents:
	  ○ 40 said they had an autism diagnosis.
	  ○ 9 identified as autistic.
	  ○ 4 were waiting for an autism assessment.
	  ○ 3 preferred not to disclose their diagnostic status.	

3.5	**Views on an Autism Kitemark**
	
	• Respondents generally believed an Autism Kitemark was a good idea or were open to the proposal.
	• People felt a kitemark could help autistic people identify environments that are safe, supportive and understanding.
	• Respondents emphasised that the scheme must:
	  ○ Be credible and accountable.
	  ○ Use robust standards.
	  ○ Include people with lived experience.
	  ○ Lead to meaningful improvements in practice.
	  ○ Avoid becoming a tick-box exercise.
	• Other important themes included:
	  ○ Effective autism training.
	  ○ Sensory awareness.
	  ○ Clear and accessible communication.	

3.6	**What Matters in Autism Support** People identified six areas that matter most when accessing support: • Autism training. • Reasonable adjustments. • Accessible communication.	

	• Sensory-friendly environments. • Staff confidence, skills and behaviours. • Co-production with autistic people and families. These themes have been translated into the proposed Autism Kitemark quality measures.	
3.7	**<u>Resources and Practical Considerations</u>** • The Norfolk Autism Partnership Board does not have dedicated funding to deliver or administer an Autism Kitemark scheme. • Development of the scheme currently relies on the commitment, knowledge and goodwill of partners and people with lived experience. • Any quality standard must therefore be practical, proportionate, achievable and sustainable. • The scheme must still provide meaningful evidence of good autism support and encourage genuine improvements.	
3.8	**Evidence Above and Below the Surface** Evidence that can be easily seen or recorded may include: • Staff training records. • Sensory audits. • Reasonable-adjustment processes. • Accessible communication materials. • Records of co-production meetings. Important factors that may be less visible include: • Staff attitudes and understanding. • Staff confidence and flexibility. • Organisational culture. • Listening to autistic people.	

	• Adapting services and support. • Creating environments where autistic people feel understood. • The Partnership does not have the resources to conduct extensive inspections or operate a formal accreditation process. • The proposed approach would collect proportionate evidence that gives confidence that good practice is happening. • The focus should be on demonstrating genuine autism-friendly practice rather than producing paperwork for its own sake.	
3.9	**Questions for Attendees** Attendees were asked to consider: • Whether demonstrating all six proposed quality themes would be enough for a service to receive an Autism Kitemark. • What additional standards, safeguards or evidence would be required if the six themes were not sufficient.	
3.10	The next sections are feedback received from the attendees of the forum	
3.11	**Door to Door Transport are a good example of support** • Treat you as a human • Work with people with neurodiversity / physical disabilities • Seem to have a good understanding and take their time to learn about he person	

3.12	**Poor example of support is the Mental Health Service** • No understanding of anxiety • Do not understand the link between ASD and Mental Health • Fail to listen to what you say and respond appropriately	
3.13	**Consider changing the word 'Reasonable' to 'Required'** • Brings it to a person-centred focus • Does not assume the same adjustment would work for everyone as each person is different and adjustments should be made for the person • Ask the person what they need, just don't assume	
3.14	**Stipulate the training needed for tier 1 to ensure it meets sufficient quality**	
3.15	Members were asked if they had any further comments they could be emailed to contact@norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk after the meeting to be included in the feedback to the Autism Support Pathways Working Group.	

Agenda Item	Close of Forum	Action and Due Date
4.1	Members were thanked for the attendance, told of the next meeting date and subject and invited to register.	

Future Meeting Dates
• 27th October 2026 18:00 -19:30 – Specialist Mental Health Service • 19th January 2027 18:00-19:30 – Year 2 progress and Year 3 Plans