

Autism Strategic Action Plan 2025-2028



A partnership between

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Foreword

The new Portsmouth Autism Strategy for 2025- 2028 is a benchmark, a roadmap, and a statement of intent for all those already identified as autistic, and the many still waiting to be formally identified.

Much has changed in our understanding of autism since the previous strategy was written in 2021.

Many more individuals have been “diagnosed”, and many more have self-identified as autistic but still face the agonizingly long wait for formal recognition.

Both groups continue to encounter discrimination, stigmatization and barriers in education, employment, access to healthcare, treatment by the criminal justice system and every other aspect of life.

The mental health of autistic people is greatly impacted and the high suicide rate amongst these people is indisputable.

In co-production with autistic people and those working with them, the Portsmouth Autism Community Forum (PACF) has identified priorities for the future. This has been corroborated by research commissioned by Portsmouth City Council, and published in the concluding document [“If not now, when?” \(2022\)](#).¹

These two pieces of work have clarified both the things that do not work for autistic people, but more importantly, what things *do* work.

We, as fellow citizens, employers, public services, and support organizations, must recognize our responsibility in ensuring that autistic people and their families feel understood, accepted, and supported by our communities and our service delivery.

Dr Veronica Price

Mother of young autistic adult, chair of Portsmouth Autism Community Forum, and volunteer at Autism Hampshire Serendipity Social Group

¹ <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s54989/Autism+-+Appendix+1+-+If+Not+Now+When.pdf>

Introduction

Welcome to the autism strategic action plan for Portsmouth, which sets out our shared commitment to improving the lives of autistic and neurodivergent people in our city.

We know that being autistic or neurodivergent in a world that is not set up for you can be frustrating, isolating and overwhelming. As a city, we have a responsibility to ensure Portsmouth is a place where everyone can thrive, feel understood, and be themselves. We are proud to be leading the way in Portsmouth. Our dedicated space for autistic adults, Room One, has gone from strength to strength since its launch and some of the feedback received from peers (see Appendix) is humbling. Equally, our strong culture of partnership working across council departments, local organisations and different sectors has enabled us to make meaningful, joined-up progress. But there is more to be done.

This plan outlines the positive work already underway and sets out our ambitions for the future - including new initiatives and expanded support over the coming months and years.

Room One will continue to be a focal point for co-production, where autistic individuals and their families can share their experiences, insights and ideas. Co-production is fundamental to our approach, ensuring that those most affected by decisions are shaping them.

We want to extend our gratitude to all of the autistic people and their families who have already contributed their time, energy and expertise. Your voices have been invaluable, and we look forward to your continued involvement as we work together to strengthen support and services for autistic and neurodivergent people across Portsmouth.

Together, we can build a city where everyone feels included, supported, and valued. Thank you for working together with us to make this happen.

Councillor Matthew Winnington

Co-chair of Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Board
Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Health and Care

Dr Linda Collie

Co-chair of Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Board
Clinical Director, Portsmouth Place for NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight and Health and Care Portsmouth

Context

Our vision

The development of this strategic action plan started with a research paper, [If not now, when?](#), written by Portsmouth City Council's Deputy Head of Service for Carers and Neurodivergence at PCC in 2022.²

This paper gave us huge insights into the lives, wants and needs of autistic people, which has led to the vision of an "inclusive city", where autistic people can live safe, independent and happy lives, where they are included, supported and accepted by their fellow citizens.

Our plan sets out five priorities to help achieve this vision:

1. **Improving and understanding the needs and lives of autistic people**
2. **Improving health and wellbeing**
3. **Better care and support**
4. **Appropriate housing options**
5. **Accessing education and securing employment**

We have primarily focused on adults over the age of 18, but the benefits of this plan will be felt by all autistic people.

Principles

The plan is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Co-production:** This is a plan for autistic and neurodivergent people, and their involvement in its development and delivery is crucial. The plan has been created in collaboration with representatives from the Portsmouth Autism Community Forum, which will also provide the role of a critical friend in its implementation.
- **Building relationships:** We look to build the necessary relationships and seek commitment from other services to ensure that the needs of autistic people are considered and included in future planning and commissioning.
- **Commissioning:** We are setting out to increase the offer within services to autistic adults, and where necessary, commission additional services to ensure the needs of autistic adults can be adequately met.
- **Safeguarding Adults:** Autistic adults can experience abuse or neglect. Any disclosures of this, in the course of this work, will be treated according to the Safeguarding Adults multi-agency policy, process and guidance.

² <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s54989/Autism+-+Appendix+1+-+If+Not+Now+When.pdf>

What is Autism?

Autism and other neurodivergences are a diverse group of conditions related to the development of the brain. The Autism Self Advocacy Network advises that autistic and neurodivergent people may experience differences in the following areas:

- Thinking
- Sensory
- Movement
- Communication
- Socialising
- Activities of daily living

This is not an exhaustive list. Autism will be different for each person. We should seek to understand the experiences of everyone, and the strengths that they bring, whilst also considering any adjustments we can make. The support levels will vary between individuals, from 24/7 support provision to independent living. The key takeaway is to speak with the person, and value them as an expert in their own experience.

Language definitions

Language, and the words we use are important and no more so then when communicating with and about autistic people and autism. The following terms will be used in this strategy:

- **Autistic person:** This refers to someone who is autistic. Autistic people have overwhelmingly shared that they prefer 'identity first' language, as autism is an intrinsic part of them.
- **Neurodiversity:** Neurodiversity is about the differences in all of our brains.
- **Neurodivergent:** This refers to when someone's brain does not process in the typically expected way.
- **Neurotypical:** This is the term used to describe someone whose brain processes in the typical expected way.

This plan talks about both autism and neurodivergence, but for succinctness, the term 'autistic people' will be used throughout this document.

This is a very brief overview of the language used, but there are many other considerations and you may be interested in this [language guide by the National Autistic Society](https://dy55nndrxke1w.cloudfront.net/file/24/xT2FqU_xTh5_JA5xTMYZxb.dfV0x/NAS_How to talk and write about autism.pdf), [How to write and talk about Autism](https://dy55nndrxke1w.cloudfront.net/file/24/xT2FqU_xTh5_JA5xTMYZxb.dfV0x/NAS_How to talk and write about autism.pdf).³ Whilst this is the widely accepted language, it is always best practice to check with any individual what they would prefer.

³ https://dy55nndrxke1w.cloudfront.net/file/24/xT2FqU_xTh5_JA5xTMYZxb.dfV0x/NAS_How to talk and write about autism.pdf

National policy

The Autism Act 2009 was followed by publication of the National Strategy in 2010, further updated in 2014 and 2021. Over the same period there has been an increased awareness of the limited research and good practice around autism and neurodivergence.

The National Strategy⁴ describes a vision for the next five years based around six areas of change:

- Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society
- Improving autistic children and young people's access to education, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood
- Supporting more autistic people into employment
- Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
- Building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care
- Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

Local progress

It is important to acknowledge the progress already made, below are some examples:

- Portsmouth Autism Community Forum has begun work with **adult mental health services** and **housing** departments to make adjustments, to improve the experience and quality of services for autistic adults.
- **Room One:** Portsmouth's Autism Support Hub, was piloted in 2022. It became an official service in 2023. In June 2024, it moved to a larger, bespoke premise, where it is hoped that it can increase the offer of support for autistic people. In late 2024, Room One also recruited to two additional posts, funded by NHS England: a Peer Support Worker and Social Care Associate Practitioner, to help meet growing demand and meet a varying range of different needs.
- WorkWise: an **employment support service** commissioned to help autistic and neurodivergent adults into employment, and to support those already in employment to sustain this began in 2024.
- Training for Professionals: a one-hour **training session** comprising interviews with six local autistic adults talking about their lived experience was produced by Portsmouth Autism Community Forum and is available for any organisation to use as part of staff development.

⁴ [The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

- In 2022, adult social care formed the Autism and Neurodivergent Transitions team, who work with young people aged 14-25 on 'preparing for adulthood'.
- In November 2023, a new council role was created for team manager of autism and neurodivergent transition team and transformation lead for autism and neurodivergent services. These roles provide extra capacity and focus to the council's support and strategic development work on Autism.

Governance

To monitor the progress of this plan, an oversight group has been established with the following core membership:

- Autistic people
- Portsmouth Autism Community Forum representatives
- Members of the council's adult social care senior management team
- Transformation lead for Autism at PCC
- Commissioning representatives at PCC
- Room One representatives
- Integrated Care Board representation
- Transition lead at PCC

Meetings of this group will be held bi-monthly and will only take place if autistic people not employed by Portsmouth City Council are in attendance. This is to ensure that lived experience remains front and centre at all times.

Relevant strategies

This plan is supported and impacted by the following policies:

- Neurodiversity Strategy 2024 - 2027 (to be published in 2025)
- [Portsmouth Adult Social Care Strategy](#)⁵
- [Portsmouth Carer's Strategy 2024 - 2028](#)⁶

⁵ <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/78.271-ASC-strategy-2021-digital-and-accessible.pdf>

⁶ <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s52932/Carers - Appendix 1 - Carers Strategy.pdf>

Priorities

1 Improving understanding of the lives and needs of autistic and neurodivergent people

"Awareness raising is not enough - we need everybody to really understand what it means to be autistic. Another positive would be people understanding that autism is lifelong and it does not have to be seen as a negative thing."

What do we want to achieve? Aims	What will we do? Actions	Who will be responsible?	When will this happen?	How will we know progress? Measurable outcomes
A Improve understanding of autism among professionals	Promote use of Portsmouth Autism Community Forum training film.	Portsmouth Autism Community Forum	Years 1 - 3	Number of views on training video will increase. At time of writing, the current views are 402 views and 3 likes.
	Roll out of Oliver McGowan Training. This has started among health and social care partners. More infrastructure is needed to complete this.	All partners	Years 1 - 3	All ASC staff will have completed the Oliver McGowan training within three years. This will be monitored via a Learning Management system.
	New autism training will be commissioned for Adult Social Care, to provide knowledge and skills whilst a training offer led by adults with lived experience is developed.	Transformation Lead, Principal Social Worker and Adult Social Care Workforce Development Lead.	Year 1	New training will have been commissioned by Adult Social Care. Attendance will be monitored via a Learning Management system. Feedback will be sought and reviewed for engagement and application.

	Development of training offer, led by adults with lived experience.	Portsmouth Autism Community Forum and Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 2	New training, led and delivered primarily by autistic adults will be developed and rolled out. Feedback will be sought and reviewed for effectiveness and application.
	Development of competency framework for Adult Social Care, to complement that produced by Children's Social Care	Transformation Lead	Year 2	A competency framework will have been co-produced and support the upskilling of the workforce. Review of effectiveness of impact after a period of embedding.
B Improve understanding within wider population and private sector - dispel stereotypes, stigma and myths around autism	Compliment the training completed by Children's Social Care for leisure providers.	Portsmouth Health and Care	Year 2	Qualitative feedback regarding spaces in the city that are inclusive and accessible will be collected.
	Development of a communication plan including use of social media.	Portsmouth Health and Care	Year 1	Engagement will be monitored, including during rollout and publication (including likes, shares and for emails, amount opened).
C Make information, advice and guidance available and accessible	Review of the publicly available information held by Adult Social Care to ensure it is accessible to autistic people.	Adult Social Care	Year 1	Information, advice and guidance available via Adult Social Care will be reviewed, with autistic people and neurodivergent people.
				Feedback will be sought via the Portsmouth Autism Community Forum around autistic people's ability to access relevant information.

What do we want to achieve? Aims	What will we do? Actions	Who will be responsible?	When will this happen?	How will we know progress? Measurable outcomes
D 'Change the narrative' - encourage positive view of autistic people and use of clear non-medicalised language	Create a language guide which has do's and don'ts for words.	Transformation Lead and Autism Hub Facilitator	Year 1	Staff will feel more educated and confident to use language related to the autistic community.
				Feedback from Room One regarding professionals' use of language.
				Audit of Care Act assessments for use of language.
E Develop a better understanding of the experiences and additional challenges for autistic people from other marginalised groups such as LGBTQ+, ethnic minority communities and across the age span	Plan and carry out scoping activity with autistic people from marginalized groups to understand what support they need.	Transformation Lead and Autism Hub Facilitator	Year 1	Scoping work will have been carried out, evidenced by a variety of means such as surveys, focus groups and ad-hoc feedback.
	Review plans, documentation and this strategic action plan with a better understanding of the challenges and experiences of autistic people from other marginalized communities.			This strategic action plan will be updated, where relevant, with the information we have learnt and the areas it impacts from the scoping work.
	Ensure co - production groups for autism services are inclusive and representative.			All co-production groups will be reviewed for their inclusivity and representation.
F Support Portsmouth University to produce local research	Link in with Portsmouth University to develop a plan for working together	Portsmouth Autism Community Forum and Health and Care Portsmouth	Year 1	Research completed with autistic people from Portsmouth will be published.

What do we want to achieve? Aims	What will we do? Actions	Who will be responsible?	When will this happen?	How will we know progress? Measurable outcomes
G Development and promotion of 'This is me passports'	Develop 'This is me' passports	All partners	Year 1	The number of autistic adults who use 'This is me' passports will have increased.
	Share widely and promote use including encouraging Health and Care professionals to complete with autistic people	All partners	Year 2	The number of professionals aware of these will have increased.

2 Improving Health and Wellbeing

"Getting access to health care is very difficult for autistic people. We all know that the health outcomes for autistic adults are not good. There are some easy changes that could help this and some more difficult ones. We should aim for both."

What do we want to achieve? <i>Aims</i>	What will we do? <i>Actions</i>	Who will be responsible?	When will we do this?	How will we know progress? <i>Measurable outcomes</i>
A Support commissioners to ensure voice of lived experience informs commissioning of future diagnostic service	Support requests for co-production, and advocate for the voice of lived experience in commissioning processes.	Commissioning	Year 2 - 3	Expertise of people with lived experience will be heard and recognised within the commissioning process. This will be seen via co-production.
B Provide clear, accessible and practical support for adults waiting for an autism or neurodivergent assessment	Develop offer from Room One around pre and post diagnostic support. This will be based on early work and feedback from people with lived experience. This will include establishing a funding source, and appropriate 6-8 week programme.	To be confirmed	Year 2	There will be a programme of support for pre and post diagnosis at Room One. Feedback will be sought on its effectiveness.
	Share and promote needs-led approach, so people can access support in a timely way whilst waiting for a diagnostic assessment.	All partners	Year 1	Autistic people and professionals working with them will understand what is meant by a needs-led approach and be focused on delivering support in this way.

	Scope agencies that require a diagnosis (health, universities) and consider what support we can offer to make these more accessible.	All partners	Year 2 - 3	We will have a better understanding of what services require a diagnosis and will have a plan for working with them to increase accessibility.
C Easier access to multi-disciplinary services to consider and treat co-occurring conditions appropriately	Create multi-agency forum to develop joint working and common understanding of co-occurring conditions.	To be confirmed	Year 2 - 3	A multi-agency forum will be in place and working together to understand and support autistic people with co-occurring conditions.
D Offer support to ensure services in Portsmouth are neurodivergent-friendly, including mental health, housing and substance misuse	Offer visits and feedback regarding environment, staff training and meeting their requirements under the Equality Act, similar to work completed with Talking Therapies.	Room One and Portsmouth Autism Community Forum	Year 1 - 3	There will be records of the service who have been provided advice and guidance, and the advice given.
	Develop a pro-forma for visits and providing feedback to ensure consistency.	Room One and Portsmouth Autism Community Forum	Year 1 - 3	A pro-forma will be available for visits, and advice given. It will be reviewed for its effectiveness after a period of use.
E Ensure autism or neurodivergence is appropriately identified on health and care recording systems	Work with Integrated Care Boards, commissioners and primary care providers to ensure process for flagging autistic status is clear and understood by all staff.	To be confirmed	Year 1	A process for appropriately identifying autism and neurodivergence on health and care recording systems will be developed.
	Explore with the case management provider how we can record autism and neurodivergence on individuals' records.	Health and Care Portsmouth	Year 1	There will be a clear way to identify people who are autistic and neurodivergent on health and care recording systems.

F Annual health checks	Advocate for the implementation of annual health checks for autistic people.	To be confirmed	Year 3	Autistic people will have better access to annual health checks. This can be measured by the number of people who have these.
G Support the work on Hospital Passports	Link in with the Learning Disability Hospital Liaison service at Queen Alexandra Hospital to understand the work they are undertaking on hospital passports. Seek feedback from autistic people on whether these will be useful. If they are found to be useful, promote the use of hospital passports.	Transformation Lead	Year 1	There will be a meeting with the Learning Disability Hospital Liaison service at Queen Alexandra Hospital and there will be more understanding around the use of hospital passports.
				Feedback, via a variety of means such as surveys, ad-hoc feedback and groups, will have informed whether this is something autistic people want to use.
				If they are something autistic people want to use, these will be promoted and we will know this is happened as the number of autistic people using hospital passports will have increased.
H Produce 'what's it like' films with key services	Approach services where these videos will be helpful, with offers of support to create them.	All Partners	Year 2 - 3	There will be a record of the services contacted regarding videos and whether one is to be produced or not.

	Build a bank of videos that can be shared with autistic and neurodivergent people when accessing services.	All Partners	Year 1 - 3	There will be produced videos that can be viewed by autistic people, before interacting with a service so they know what to expect. Their levels of engagement including views, likes and comments will be monitored.
	Find a storage solution for the created videos, so they are easily accessible.			
I Develop a pathway for autistic and neurodivergent young people's profiling tool to come with them into adult services	Scope the number of young people who will have a profiling tool who may require the support of Adult Social Care.	Neurodiversity 0 - 19 Team Lead and Transformation Lead	Year 2	There will be data available as to how many young people with a profile may require support from Adult Social Care.
	Promote understanding of the profiling tool within Adult Social Care and Adult Mental Health for increased awareness.			Professionals will tell us via questionnaires that they understand the profiling tool and how it can support adults.

3 Better Care and Support

"There are lots of autistic adults who live isolated, lonely and unhappy lives. The numbers of autistic suicides highlight this. Some improvements to social care, more advocacy and more social groups could make a real difference."

What do we want to achieve? <i>Aims</i>	What will we do? <i>Actions</i>	Who will be responsible?	When will this happen?	How will we know progress? <i>Measurable outcomes</i>
A Increase number of autistic adults getting access to Care Act social care assessments	Establish formal care pathway for autistic adults referred to Adult Social Care.	Transformation Lead - Portsmouth Adult Social Care	Year 2 - 3	Number of autistic adults having Care Act assessments will have increased and data will be available through Adult Social Care teams.
B Improve the knowledge and skill base of adult social care services	Establish 'autism champions' in all adult social care teams.	Transformation Lead - Portsmouth Adult Social Care	Year 1	A champions network will be set up and active with specific terms of reference.
C Develop and enhance the range of support available at Room One	Seek the support of agencies such as substance misuse, mental health and housing to provide drop-ins to Room One.	Room One and Transformation Lead - Portsmouth Adult Social Care	Year 1	Drop-ins by various agencies will be in place. They will be reviewed after a period of embedding to ensure effectiveness and attendance.

	Complete scoping for what additional support autistic people want from Room One.	Room One and Transformation Lead - Portsmouth Adult Social Care	Year 1 - 3	Feedback will have been gained through surveys, focus groups and ad-hoc opportunities that informs us what support they want Room One to provide.
	Create a plan for the commissioning of any viable support options.	Room One and Transformation Lead - Portsmouth Adult Social Care	Year 1	Plans will be devised for the support autistic people have informed us they want. These will be taken to the Room One oversight group for discussion.
D Improve and expand availability of peer support and specialist advocacy services for autistic adults	Explore funded training programmes via the IMRoc Programme (training provider). If not eligible, consider other funding routes and training to bring more peer volunteers / workers on board	Room One, Transformation Lead and Commissioners	Year 1 - 2	Further training will have been commissioned. Volunteers will be in place. There will be increased numbers of people supported by Room One.
E Develop an offer of life skills programmes for autistic people	Develop independent living skills programmes that include budgeting, cooking, cleaning amongst others, using NHS England funding sourced for this purpose.	Room One and Transformation Lead	Year 2	Life skills groups will be run on a regular basis. People will fill out a questionnaire before and after. Scores will indicate that autistic people feel able to be more independent.

F Create a directory of opportunities for services, social and friendship groups available to autistic adults	Produce a searchable directory of services, social and friendship groups.	Room One and Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 2	Directory will be created, with regular updates. Increased number of views, or people will be accessing the directory.
G Autistic people will be able to access direct payments to purchase their support	Transformation Lead will join Adult Social Care direct payment work.	Transformation Lead and Adult Social Care	Year 1 - 3	Number of autistic adults with direct payments will have increased.
	Autistic people will be offered direct payments as an option to purchase their preferred support.	Transformation Lead and Adult Social Care	Year 1 - 3	Feedback will be sought about direct payments, and this will let us know if it is working for autistic adults.
H Support the Adult Social Care agenda around developing micro commissioning and ensuring the needs of autistic people are considered	Link with Direct Payments project to ensure work on micro commissioning considers autistic people.	Transformation Lead and Adult Social Care Commissioning Manager	Year 3	There will be more services available to support autistic people.

4 Appropriate housing options

"For some autistic people their housing situation is a big part of their anxiety. Some people's lives can be transformed with a change of accommodation."

What do we want to achieve? <i>Aims</i>	What will we do? <i>Actions</i>	Who will be responsible?	When will this happen?	How will we know progress? <i>Measurable outcomes</i>
A Learn about the housing needs of autistic people with a view to particularly understanding upcoming needs, for example autistic people currently living with their parents	Work with autistic people to understand their housing needs.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	Using a range of sources, such as surveys, focus groups and ad-hoc feedback, autistic people and the important people in their lives will tell us what housing needs they have.
	Scope upcoming needs via Children's Social Care and 0 - 19 Neurodiversity Team.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	Recording systems and the team's knowledge will inform us of the needs young autistic people have for housing. From this, we can develop a plan to ensure these needs can be adequately met.
B Work with housing colleagues to ensure a range of housing options for autistic people including a temporary accommodation offer	Work with the temporary housing team to understand the temporary housing offer, how it works and what influence we can have on future commissioning.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	Transformation lead will meet with the temporary housing team to understand the temporary housing offer and discuss future commissioning. A plan will be developed from this meeting.

	Work with housing on future planning and commissioning to ensure housing that meets autistic people's sensory needs is considered.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	A plan for including autistic people in the future of commissioning housing will be developed.
	Work on developing support options for those in temporary accommodation, including developing their support networks.			There will be support available to autistic people in temporary housing. We will receive qualitative feedback that indicates they feel more supported.
C Work with housing colleagues to improve the experience of autistic people seeking accommodation	Encourage housing department to create autism champions.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	Housing department will have autism champions who have been upskilled via training to work with autistic people.
	Arrange housing drop-ins with Room One to enable people to access support in a preventative way.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	Regular drop ins will be provided by the Housing department. These will be reviewed after a period of time to ensure effectiveness and attendance.
D Work with Housing Occupational Therapist to understand how we can utilise this role for the benefit of autistic people	Meet with Occupational Therapist to understand their role and the support they can provide, as well as identify areas of upskilling.	Transformation Lead	Year 1 - 3	There will be an identified plan for how the housing Occupational Therapist will support autistic people. Autistic people will provide feedback on how this has benefited them.

5 Accessing education and securing employment

"The percentage of autistic adults in long-term employment is very low. With greater understanding, some adjustments and flexibility, lots of employers could tap into some really talented people with great potential."

What do we want to achieve? Aims	What will we do? Actions	Who will be responsible?	When will this happen?	How will we know progress? Measurable outcomes
A Grow the employment support offer for autistic people	Develop links with Job Centre Portsmouth to establish what support they can offer.	Transformation Lead and Autism Hub Facilitator	Year 1 - 2	A meeting will have taken place with Portsmouth Job Centre and a plan for collaborating will have been developed.
	When the current contract expires, a co-produced tender process will take place to review support.	Commissioners	Year 3	A co-produced tendering process will be devised and take place, resulting in the tendering of an employment service.
B Promote use of various vocational profiles	Gain an understanding of the various vocational profiles and undertake any relevant training.	Transformation Lead, Autism and Neurodivergent Transition Team and Autism Hub facilitator	Year 1 - 3	There will be a record of the staff who have completed the vocational profile training.
	Increase usage where appropriate.	Transformation Lead, Autism and Neurodivergent Transition Team and Autism Hub facilitator	Year 1 - 3	There will be a number of completed vocational profiles that can be audited for quality.

	Promote use to other services working with autistic people.	Transformation Lead, Autism and Neurodivergent Transition Team and Autism Hub facilitator	Year 1 - 3	A variety of services will be aware of the vocational profile, and using within their services.
C Working with local employers to understand the needs of autistic people in employment	Promote use of employment video created by Portsmouth Autism Community Forum.	Autism Hub Facilitator, Transformation Lead and Portsmouth Autism Community Forum	Year 1 - 3	Number of views on training video will increase. At time of writing, the current views are 402 views and 3 likes.
	Scope with autistic people what further resources they feel are needed and develop a plan to source or create these resources.	Autism Hub Facilitator, Transformation Lead and Portsmouth Autism Community Forum	Year 1 - 2	Autistic people will be asked in a variety of ways which resources they feel are needed to support employers to meet their needs.
	Promote how autistic people can be supported in their employment with employers.	Employment Service	Year 1 -3	Guidance on reasonable adjustments will be developed and shared with local employers. This will be reviewed after a period of use.
D Improve understanding and promotion of supported internships	Autism Hub Facilitator and Transformation Lead to link in with Special Educational Needs and Disability Employment lead to understand supported internships.	Transformation Lead	Year 1	There will be an established link between autism services in Adult Social Care and Special Educational Needs and Disability Employment Leads.

	Work with Special Educational Needs and Disability Employment lead to promote use of supported internships where they meet people's needs.	Transformation Lead	Year 2	There will be a plan for the promotion of supported internships.
E Improve understanding and promotion of supported apprenticeships	Link with Portsmouth City Council apprenticeship team to understand supported apprenticeship offer.	Transformation Lead	Year 1	There will be established links between autism services and the apprenticeship team.
	Develop a plan of promotion for supported apprenticeship opportunities, where they meet people's needs.	Transformation Lead	Year 2	There will be a plan for the promotion of supported apprenticeships.
F Source and promote for autistic people and employers information on creative reasonable adjustments	Scope information and guidance readily available on reasonable adjustments, and promote where appropriate.	Autism Hub Facilitator and Transformation Lead	Years 1 - 3	There will be a pool of resources around reasonable adjustments that can be shared with autistic/neurodivergent people and employers.
	Create resources for autistic people on identifying reasonable adjustments that could be made and how to ask for these.	Autism Hub Facilitator and Transformation Lead	Years 1 - 3	There will be co-produced guidance on asking for and suggesting reasonable adjustments. This will be reviewed for its effectiveness after a period of use.
	Link with local unions to understand how they are	Autism Hub Facilitator and Transformation Lead	Years 1 - 3	There will be established links with

	supporting autistic employees with gaining reasonable adjustments.			local unions and autism services.
G Development of the self-employment offer and social enterprises alongside agenda for micro-commissioning	Scope autistic people's views on self-employment and how this could be developed.	Transformation Lead and Senior Commissioning Manager	Year 2 - 3	Autistic people will be asked, using a variety of means such as ad-hoc feedback, surveys and focus groups, how they feel about self employment and how it can benefit them.
	Consider what micro - commissioning is needed, and would benefit autistic people with the Adult Social Care senior commissioning manager.	Transformation Lead and Senior Commissioning Manager	Year 2 - 3	A co-produced plan for micro commissioning of services that autistic people feel will benefit them, will be developed.

Appendix 1: Feedback for Room One

"If I didn't have Room One, I'd probably still be housebound or with Crisis. I am able to learn new skills and I feel safe" - Feedback received in September 2023

All 13 pieces of feedback received in September 2023 noted the benefits of having an autistic person to lead Room One.

"It has helped me go back to Football" - Feedback received in September 2023

"When I told one client about it, he became quite tearful, saying that he'd been struggling for so long and he was so glad that Portsmouth finally had a service like this. Another client told me that she'd felt different... like an outsider her whole life and that a place like Room One was a great idea to help people finally feel connected." - Professional feedback received December 2023

"I wouldn't be alive without Room One." - Feedback received in January 2024

Appendix 2: Co-production

Room One is Portsmouth's autism hub. It provides support with peer mentoring, advice, guidance, information and signposting. All aspects of Room One have been co-produced, including the naming of the service, the decoration of the room in which it was based and the initial recruitment of the autism hub facilitators alongside the services it planned to provide.

Examples of co-production

Autistic and neurodivergent people were involved in the initial setting up of the service including: what the service would provide, the recruitment of the team, but also practical aspects such as the colour of the walls and the name of the service.

Room One has an oversight group, involving autistic people, Portsmouth Autism Community Forum (a community forum for autistic people, people who support autistic people including partners, relatives and carers, and professionals supporting autistic people), Room One and the local authority, who come together on a bi-monthly basis to develop the service and ensure good governance and quality service is provided.

Room One team attends the Portsmouth Autism Community Forum, to update the wider autistic community and their supporters on the service and to seek feedback from autistic people around this service, to be used in future development. From this, the team noted there was a call for a loved ones group (this is to encompass all supporters of autistic people including partners, parents and siblings, and to also note that not all autistic people identify with having a carer). This group is being led by the parent of an autistic adult, and supported by Portsmouth's Carers Centre. It has so far been very well received.

Room One is led by autistic people for autistic people, so ensures that at all times autistic people's needs, views and wishes are central to this service and what it provides. The service provides peer support groups, that are around topics chosen by the people using the service including social media and autism, comfort items and focused interests.

In 2024, an NHS England bid was completed based on what autistic people tell us they want from the service including additional peer support, better access to care and support and some groups around life skills and life organisation. The bid was successful and autistic people were involved in the recruitment of two additional staff members and in the development of their roles via the oversight group.

Room One is often contacted by other services who wish to co-produce services to support them to find volunteers to be involved. Room One actively supports this, and ensures that autistic people have the opportunity to be involved in this. Room One will also host events to facilitate this. For example in summer 2024 a workshop was held by a research provider to find out what areas of autism should be priorities for research.

Appendix 3: Case study - Into work (YouTrust)

T was referred to the *Into Work* service by the Transition team. She was about to start her first shift and was very reluctant and anxious. After a discussion during her profile meeting she was encouraged to believe in herself and give her best to start her role.

On the first day on the job, T was accompanied to the workplace by the Into Employment Worker. She stood outside for a short while contemplating whether she was making the right decision to start working at The Cooperative Food. After more encouragement to understand the benefits of working, she was supported to enter the store for her induction. After a tour of the store she was presented with details on manual handling which was quite overwhelming for her to read. After bursting out into tears she was reassured that the Into Work Service can assist in breaking down aspects of the document to help her find clarity in it. A brief discussion with T and a staff member / manager explained that support can be given for e-learning, however the team at the coop decided to support the client to complete this.

After a few weeks of frequently checking in with T and the employer it was evident that she was enjoying her job and was settling into her role very well. She was observed to be multi-tasking, serving customers and dealing with issues on the self-check. The manager had many positive things to say about her work. It was great to see the changes in the attitude of T towards her work.

Client feedback: *"The service has helped me by helping me keep my job. I sometimes feel listened to and work well with the service. The good thing about working with the service is that it helps you".*

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