

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 19 July 2023

'Living My Best Life' - A Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent People in Staffordshire 2023-2028



Councillor Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care said,

Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care said:

“People of any age with a disability or neurodivergence should be supported to live the best life they can, for as long as they are able. This new strategy ensures these people are put at the centre of everything we do in Staffordshire.

“Throughout the development of this strategy, we have been speaking directly to those with experience of disability and neurodivergence.

This means we have been able to put something together that is meaningful, will make a difference, and has been directly influenced by disabled and neurodivergent people, their carers and their families.”



Councillor Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said:

“Young people who have a disability or neurodivergence need to be supported so they can live their best lives. Throughout the creation of this strategy, we have learned that this is especially important when it comes to their education, social lives, and families. By putting them at the centre of this strategy, we can ensure their needs are met, their voices are heard, and they have choice and control over the support they have.”



Councillor Jonathan Price, Cabinet Member for Education (including SEND) said:

“Taking into account the unique experiences and thoughts of young people with disabilities and neurodivergences are crucial in shaping a strategy that truly works. By listening to them in putting together this strategy, we can empower them to live their best lives, where they are encouraged to dream big and are supported in achieving their goals.”

Report Summary:

Staffordshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have jointly developed a final draft of a new ‘Living my Best Life’: Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028. This is informed by evidence of need and best practice and by feedback from engagement focussing on quality of life and factors associated with people living their best lives.

The vision for the new strategy is: ‘We want Staffordshire to become a place where people living with disabilities and neurodivergences can do what matters to them; where they are valued and treated as equals in all aspects of society; and where they can live a healthier and better quality of life for longer.’ This is reflected in five strategic outcomes for the new strategy.

Following ICB and Cabinet approval, an action plan based on the five strategic outcomes is to be co-produced by the end of December 2023. Delivery of the action plan will be overseen by the new Disability Partnership Board and ultimately, the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approve the proposed ‘Living my Best Life’: Report on the Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028.

Cabinet – Wednesday 19 July 2023

'Living My Best Life' - A Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent People in Staffordshire 2023-2028

Recommendations of the Cabinet Members Julia Jessel, Mark Sutton and Jonathan Price

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approve the proposed 'Living my Best Life': Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Health and Care

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Staffordshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have jointly developed a final draft of a new 'Living my Best Life': Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028. This replaces the Whole Life Disability Strategy 2018-2023. It aspires to support all disabled and neurodivergent individuals to live the best lives possible.
2. There are around 21,000 adults with a learning disability living in Staffordshire, of whom 3,400 have a moderate or severe disability, and 7,000 adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. 26,000 Staffordshire residents aged 18-65 have a disability that makes personal care difficult; 35,000 aged over 65 are unable to manage at least one mobility activity on their own, such as going to the toilet or getting in and out of bed. 6,200 adults have registrable eye conditions or are severely visually impaired; 18,200 experience severe hearing loss (Source: Poppi and Pansi Data, Oxford Brookes). Currently, national prevalence data for children and young people is limited. There is no national repository of quality reviewed data for individuals under 18.
3. The majority of people with disabilities and neurodivergences manage with help and support from their family, friends and communities, and assistance from technologies. It is important that universal services such as education, shops, leisure and cultural activities, and health services are inclusive, accessible and adapted to their needs. Also, that there are appropriate housing options that enable them to live independently. A

small number of people with disabilities and neurodivergences are eligible for dedicated care and support from the County Council and/or the NHS and need a reasonable choice of good quality, sustainable services that can achieve their outcomes.

4. The Strategy will complement the [Staffordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy](#) and the [SEND Strategy for Special Provision - Staffordshire County Council](#). In addition, the strategy considers national statutory duties, national government and NHS disability and neurodivergence guidance, strategy and plans, and various CQC and NICE best practice guidance. It also considers related local strategies and plans to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and neurodivergences including:
 - a. [Our strategy for carers - Staffordshire County Council 2019-2023](#)
 - b. Good Mental Health in Staffordshire: 2023-28
 - c. [Staffordshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy \(2022-2027\)](#)
 - d. NHS Operation and Joint Forward Plan
 - e. [Autism Joint Implementation Plan \(2018-2023\)](#)

'Living my Best Life': Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028

5. The Strategy has been co-produced through a two-stage process:
 - a. Stage One. A survey exploring quality of life and factors considered most important by disabled and neurodivergent people for them to live their best lives. This was carried out during December 2022. The findings are summarised in the next section and have been used to develop a draft vision and priorities for the Strategy.
 - b. Stage Two. The draft vision and priorities for the Strategy have been discussed with disabled and neurodivergent people, politicians, carers and professionals face-to-face in each district/borough during January and February 2023 to seek their views.
6. The Strategy has also been co-produced with commissioners and senior managers across Care Commissioning, Children and Families and the Integrated Care Board. This is to ensure we can be honest about what is possible within the resources available and develop a vision, priorities and outcomes that work towards the aspirations of disabled and neurodivergent people whilst remaining realistic and deliverable.

What We Have Learnt

7. Over 500 individuals responded to the survey across all eight Staffordshire Districts, including 265 disabled and neurodivergent people. Responses were provided from all gender, sexual orientation and ethnic groups identified in the survey. 146 carers and 97 professionals and organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors also responded to the survey.
8. Views on disabled and neurodivergent people's quality of life suggest:
 - a. Disabled and neurodivergent people have good contact with friends and family; where they live feels like home and a place where they can do what they want; and the people who support them are listening to their needs.
 - b. Disabled and neurodivergent people do not have as many opportunities as they would like to learn and develop and do not know enough about activities and services in their communities. Disabled and neurodivergent people are not getting as much help as they would like when needed or as much choice and control as they would like – carers of disabled and neurodivergent children and young people felt this particularly strongly.
9. The factors mentioned most as being important by disabled and neurodivergent people to live their best lives were as follows:
 - a. Adults: 1 - Family, friends and relationships; 2 - Access to health and social care, shops and other services, 3 - Appropriate and safe home, 4 - Social life, social skills and getting out and about, and 5 - Learning and education.
 - b. Children and young people: 1- Positive educational experience; 2 - Social life, social skills, getting out and about, and 3 - Family, friends and relationships, 4 - Adjustments made to support me, and 5 - Personal safety.
10. A draft vision for the Strategy and key priorities were drafted in response to the feedback received from the Stage One engagement process. The Stage Two engagement process (to engage on these) involved face to face conversations with disabled and neurodivergent people, carers, professionals and independent organisations. Some individuals were able to reflect more than one perspective (for example a carer and a person with a disability themselves). It also involved engagement through various forums. These included Day Opportunities, Supported Living and the Learning Disability and Autism Carers Forum working group and the

Staffordshire Autism Joint Implementation Group. They also included various district-based voluntary organisations, facilitated by an independent Advocacy provider.

11. A summary of the feedback that has been received in the Stage Two engagement process and associated actions are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Stage two feedback and actions taken in response to that.

Feedback received	Actions taken
Most of the changes to the vision focussed on improvements to the wording, not the intention within it, and its deliverability.	The vision statement has been shortened and simplified. Embedding the Disability Partnership Board arrangements are seen as key to oversee Strategy delivery.
A small number of individuals (mostly from the Learning Disability and Adult Social Care Carers Forum) have had slightly different ideas about how we worded our emerging priorities for the Strategy.	The suggestions given for rewording were very action orientated. This approach led to a rewording of emerging priorities into clearer strategic outcome statements to drive positive change.
People identified a number of issues and potential actions that they felt the Strategy needed to address.	Suggestions people gave were captured in relation to individual strategic outcomes and we found a good connect between these. They have been used to create key priority actions in the Strategy and will also inform the action plan.
A small number of individuals indicated that they were not comfortable with our 'Living my Best Life' title and some recommended that Autism should not be mentioned separately within the title of the Strategy. There has also been some debate over the best terminology to use for neurodivergences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will retain the Strategy title 'Living my Best Life' agreed by most people we have engaged with. Autism has however been removed from the title. • Some individuals suggested we used terms such as 'neurodiversity' instead of 'neurodivergence' or 'deaf' instead of 'hearing impaired'. We have sought advice from communications colleagues in drafting the Strategy.

12. The strategy was informed by stage one and two engagement feedback, evidence of need (summarised in paragraphs 2 and 3), evidence of best practice (summarised in paragraph 4), the draft Strategy (Appendix One) and a Community Impact Assessment (Appendix Two). A review of feedback linked to quality of life was collated from previous engagement processes and cross checked against current engagement feedback. This demonstrated a strong association between current and previous viewpoints shared.
13. The vision for the new strategy is: 'We want Staffordshire to become a place where people living with disabilities and neurodivergences can do

what matters to them; where they are valued and treated as equals in all aspects of society; and where they can live a healthier and better quality of life for longer.’

14. The strategic outcomes of the strategy are as follows:

- a. Staffordshire is more open and inclusive – The focus is on raising awareness and people having more equitable access to day-to-day opportunities.
- b. Stronger partnerships are built around and include disabled and neurodivergent people – the focus is on ensuring more individuals with disabilities and neurodivergences are better connected and able to influence a range of services and strategies impacting on them in their local area. It is also about exploring more opportunities for the Integrated Care Board and the Council to work together for the benefit of these groups.
- c. Disabled and neurodivergent people are communicating their needs and action is being taken – The focus is on building more opportunities so that individuals with disabilities and neurodivergences can self-advocate, and for their needs to be listened to.
- d. Disabled and neurodivergent people and their carers are better informed and in control – The focus is on understanding how individuals with disabilities and neurodivergences prefer to receive information, advice and guidance and ensure it is sufficiently comprehensive and accessible to them.
- e. In carrying out their responsibilities for care and support, the ICB and Council will consider the whole person’s needs, aspirations and what they can do. It will not stop them doing what they want to do – The focus is on ensuring more timely identification and diagnostic services and aspirational person-centred care and support.

15. The strategy focusses on supporting people to live their best lives, regardless of the nature of their disability or neurodivergence or whether they have care and support needs. It considers experiences and needs of individuals throughout their lives in education, work and as individuals in their homes and in local communities using transport, accessing social, leisure and cultural opportunities and accessing local shops and services and health and social care support.

Governance Arrangements

16. An overview of the learning from the engagement processes was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 2 March 2023.

17. The draft strategy will be presented and reviewed at the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 June 2023 and any potential amendments will be made accordingly following this meeting.
18. The draft strategy will also be reviewed at the ICB Quality and Safety Committee on 14 June 2023 and considered for approval by the ICB board on 20 July 2023.
19. The Strategy will be considered for final approval by Cabinet on 19 July 2023.
20. An associated action plan will be co-produced by the end of December 2023. Delivery of the action plan will be overseen by the new Disability Partnership Board and ultimately, the Health and Wellbeing Board. Progress will also be reported periodically to Cabinet and the ICB.

Legal Implications

21. There are no legal implications anticipated from the strategy itself as both the Council's relevant current statutory responsibilities and potential future legislative and national policy changes have been considered in its development. There are no expected contractual implications.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

22. There are no expected financial implications arising from the strategy. The associated action plan will be delivered within existing resources.

Climate Change Implications

23. Whilst the strategy is not anticipated to have significant climate change implications, there are a number of areas that relate to the environment that have been identified through the Community Impact Assessment. These include:
 - a. Encouraging access to green spaces and time outdoors to help people look after their own physical and mental wellbeing, acknowledging the benefits and accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities and neurodivergences.
 - b. The strategy includes the outcome for people with disabilities and neurodivergences to be supported to live in the community in good quality homes of their own, influencing the planning and maintenance of suitable high quality, affordable housing, including energy efficient specialist housing solutions. These buildings need to be "fit for the

future" and suitable to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate as a means of climate change adaptation.

- c. The strategy will encourage good workplace practices that balance supporting both the wellbeing of the employee (and their accessibility needs) and reducing carbon emissions.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - 'Living my Best Life': Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent People in Staffordshire 2023-2028. *Draft Strategy*

Appendix 2 - 'Living my Best Life' - A Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent People in Staffordshire 2023 - 2028 (Design Proof)

Community Impact Assessment

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Andrew Jepps, Assistant Director, Care Commissioning, Health and Care
Report Author: Nicola Day
Job Title: Senior Commissioning Manager
Telephone No.: 07815 827425
E-Mail Address: nicola.day@staffordshire.gov.uk

