**Sheffield Autism Partnership Board**

**4th June 2025**

**In Attendance:**

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| Anna Guest **(Chair)** | Siobhan Salter **(Minutes)** | Liz Tooke |
| Chinyere Ehosiem | Michelle Cook | Ben Duke |
| Danny Antrobus | Rachel Hardy | Helena Lath |
| David Newman | Susan Kirkman | Neil Anderson |
| Charlotte Worthington | Joe Hamshere |  |

**Apologies Noted: Christine Anderson, Sylvia Johnson, Sandra Capewell, Mary Vere, Raheel Baig, Kaarina Hollo, Katie Monette, Richard Groves**

**Agenda & Minutes**

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| **Time** | **Item** | **Speaker** |
| 10:00am | **Welcome and introductions*** Anna Guest welcomed everybody to today's meeting, and ran through housekeeping and what would be on today’s agenda

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| 10:05am | **Minutes of Last Meeting and Sign Off*** Anna summarised the minutes taken from the last meeting and asked if anybody had any comments on this.
* Nobody highlighted any issues with the minutes from the last meeting, so it Anna took this as confirmation that the board were happy to sign off on the minutes.
 | Anna Guest |
| 10.10am | **Review of Workstreams – Open Discussion*** There have been comments on the lack of direction in the workstreams, and members felt it necessary for a discussion on how to move forward with this.
* David highlighted that on a general note there doesn't seem to be any governance around the workstreams. Alexis suggested getting funding for a project manager to help with this governance in a previous meeting.
* It would be worth having a separate series of meetings for updates on the workstreams, with just highlights brought to this meeting.
* Liz advised that it’s not always clear on what the workstreams need to be doing, which can make it tricky to move forward with them.
* **Action:** Find out where Alexis got to with funding for project manager for the workstreams.
* **Action:** Arrange separate meetings for the workstreams to update on the workstreams.
* Chinyere agreed that we really need that separate meeting around workstreams to be more accountable and show more commitment to the workstreams.
* David highlighted that the work we are doing in the workstreams relate to the Autism Strategy, and asked if anybody had any updates on when this is due to launch, as originally it was supposed to launch in 2026.
* Sue updated that it was due to be launch on day Matt Hancock had to resign. Since then we’ve had an election and the board has been since trying to contact Minister Kinnock. Based on this Sue thinks it will be a long time before the new strategy launches.
* Liz highlighted that if we have too many things to work on at the same time, it can be really hard to get anything done. It would be good if we can be strict about working on a smaller number of things and doing them well, instead of having so many things to work on. If we have an idea of what needs to be worked on based on the new strategy, we can see what needs to be achieved based on this and make it our focus.
* Rachel advised that the lack of organisation and strategy is making it particularly difficult for those with autism, which is why she feels the need for a project manager is important. Autistic people want to be involved in this work; however, she finds this difficult whilst things feel so messy.
 | All |
| 10:30am | **Review of Festival – Open Discussion*** Chinyere advised that she was part of the planning committee for the festival and was one of the speakers at one of the events. The festival was a good start of something. We had a lot of challenges and there is a lot of learning to take away from it. The planning committee are meeting in the coming weeks to debrief on the event to discuss what worked well, what didn't, what can be improved going forward, etc.
* The timing was not really right, especially for young people to attend this event. It was probably something not considered at the time. Timing can be looked at for any future events to ensure young people can attend as well as adults.
* There were things that happened beyond the organisers control and some things that could have been managed better, but overall, it was a good start.
* Sue advised that she was supposed to be involved in the organisation of the festival, but nobody ever contacted her about this. Sue raised that she is here at the board to represent those that can't speak for themselves and carers who care for people with learning difficulties and Autism. It's a point Sue raises at every meeting and although it's acknowledged nothing ever happens around this and she is starting to question her purpose of being part of the board if this isn't going to be a focus with the board.
* Anna apologised to Sue that this is happening and advised we would carry this over to the next agenda item.
* Rachel advised that she wasn't involved in organisation but attended the event. She wouldn't have described it as a festival, but thought it was really good. There was lots to take away from it. Apart from some difficulties finding the venue at Sheffield Hallam University, Rachel really enjoyed it. There were great talks, she enjoyed networking at town hall and was an excellent start overall.
 | All |
| 10:45am | **Review the Purpose of the Board – Open Discussion*** Rachel feels the board is set up to fail as it's trying to cover too many areas. It was set up at a time when not as many people were diagnosed autistic. Now there are many more people that fall somewhere under the umbrella, and so many people have so many different needs now. At the moment it feels like a mess.
* David advised it would be useful to be clear where work is happening. We need to establish whether the work is happening here or on the Learning Disability Board. This would help avoid repetition.
* Liz highlighted that it’s really important that everybody who needs to be considered is considered. We need to make sure we're not missing anybody, including those who don't have a voice. The important thing is people's needs are covered, and at the moment we risk missing some people altogether as Sue raised earlier.
* Sue highlighted that we need to make sure people are being listened to. She doesn't feel this board is the place for people with learning disabilities. It may be worth having a sub-group of this board for people with learning disabilities and autism to keep these separate.
* **Action:** Arrange a meeting with members of the learning disability board and autism partnership board to clarify who deals with what.
* Chinyere agreed that this meeting needs to be focused around autism only, and have a separate meeting relating to other matters alongside autism, such as mental health and learning disabilities.
* Liz suggested that the workstreams and strategies need to have a clear idea of who they need to influence and involve.
* Rachel highlighted that the board has statutory requirements, and because of this she doesn't think it can just be about autism. There are so many serious subjects that need to be talked about that don't. These things need to be looked at.
* Anna asked for people to bring any questions they have to the next meeting about the purpose of the board so council representatives can answer them.
* Michelle advised that when it comes to other disabilities, whatever it is that somebody has, when they are diagnosed with autism as well it puts a totally different slant on their other disabilities and feels this is an urgent area that needs to be looked at. She thinks it's important that we take into consideration all other strands such as mental health, learning disabilities, etc., and it's our job as the board to put that autistic slant on it.
* **Action:** Anna to email Siobhan with questions that need answering at the next meeting.
 | All |
| 11:00am | Comfort Break |  |
| 11:05am | **Discussion around Holding Future Meetings in Person – Open Discussion*** Anna asked the board if they would be in favour of an in-person meeting. She only received four thumbs up to this question, so the majority are not in favour of this at the moment, but Anna will keep asking moving forward.

**Suggested Agenda Items for Next Meeting*** David suggested we review the Terms of Reference at the next meeting as an agenda item.
* A quick update of the Autism Festival as the debrief session will have taken place before the next meeting.
* An agenda item on PIP.
* **Action:** See if somebody can do a presentation on PIP with expertise in this area. Potentially somebody from Citizen's Advice Bureau.
* Michelle suggested for a future meeting potentially having somebody from the Sheffield Advocacy Hub about the support they can offer around PIP. Charlotte offered to do this as she has done so previously.
* David suggested having a follow up session looking at the suicide prevention strategy and how this can help autistic people specifically. Anita Winter leads on the work around learning from the lives and deaths. David could contact her to see if she would be able to attend a meeting.
* Rachel highlighted that she thinks these discussions are important but would like to know how these topics can be raised in a way that is sensitive to the autistic members of the board, as these issues affect them directly.
* Liz suggested a pre-meeting with Anita on how to address this sensitively before it comes to the board.
* David - Suggested trigger warnings are put on the agenda relating to this, and that the agenda is sent in advance so board members are aware of the topics that are due to be discussed.
 | AllAll |
| 11:20am | **Summarise Agreed Actions and Responsible Person(s)*** **Action:** Find out where Alexis got to with funding for project manager for the workstreams.
* **Action:** Arrange separate meetings for the workstreams to update on the workstreams.
* **Action:** Arrange a meeting with members of the learning disability board and autism partnership board to clarify who deals with what.
* **Action:** Anna to email Siobhan with questions that need answering at the next meeting.
* **Action:** See if somebody can do a presentation on PIP with expertise in this area. Potentially somebody from Citizen's Advice Bureau.
 | Siobhan/RichardRichard/Emma/StephRichard/Emma/StephAnnaTBC |
| 11:25am | **Any Other Business*** Nothing raised or discussed.
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Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th August: 3:15pm – 4:45pm