



Liverpool's Commitment to Neurodiversity: A Strategy for an Inclusive City

2025-2035



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The strategy has been created through engagement with neurodivergent individuals, professionals who work closely with neurodivergent people, their families and carers, and wide range of organisations throughout Liverpool.

We would like to thank:

- Advanced Solutions Community Network
- ADHD Foundation
- Alternative Futures Group
- Autism Initiative
- Autism Together
- The Brian Charity
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership
- HMP Prison and Probation Services (North West)
- Ladder of Life
- Liverpool Adult ADHD - Ladders of Life
- The Liverpool Autism Hub
- Liverpool Disability Lived Experience Group
- Liverpool Neurodivergent Co-Production Group and Unheard Voices
- Liverpool Parent and Carer Forum (LivPac)
- MENCAP
- Merseyside Autistic Adults
- Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board
- NHS Alder Hey Children's Hospital Trust
- Options for Supported Living
- People First Merseyside
- PSS (Person Shaped Support)
- Rotunda
- University of Liverpool
- VCS Health and Wellbeing Network



Special thanks to all the children, young people, parents and carers who took part in the Cheshire and Merseyside Children and Young People Neurodiversity Pathway Engagement workshops, and to those who participated in the Liverpool community engagement events and completed the survey to inform the development of this strategy.¹

Foreword

Welcome to the Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategy, a collaborative effort shaped by the voices of neurodivergent individuals, their families, and carers. This strategy sets out our vision of making Liverpool a truly neuroinclusive and welcoming city, one where neurodivergent people are empowered to live well and pursue their own version of a fulfilling life.

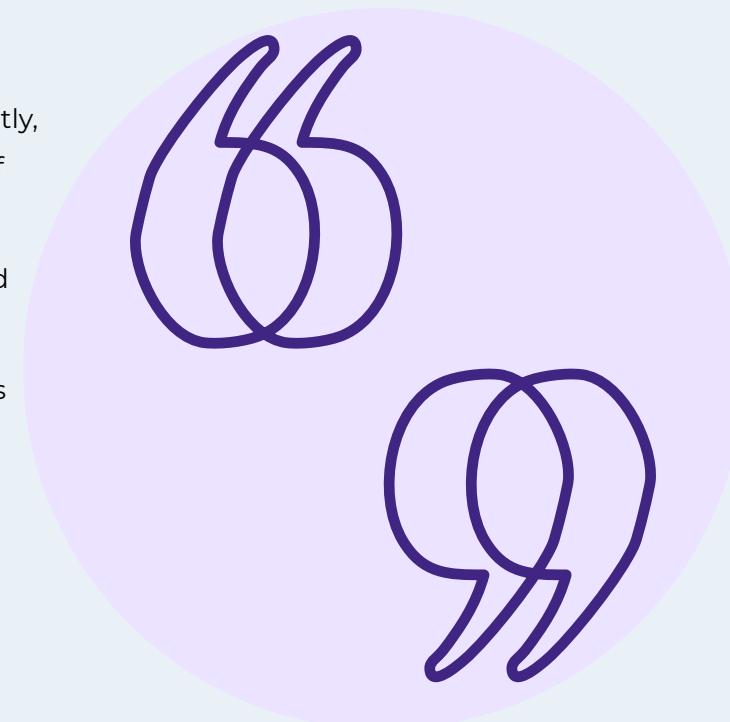
Over the past two decades, awareness and understanding of neurodiversity have grown significantly, with more people being diagnosed or self-identifying each year. In Liverpool, approximately 1.7% of the population has received an autism assessment a figure projected to rise by 9% by 2040.²

However, the actual number is likely much higher as many people face long waits to diagnosis and limited access to appropriate support.

Despite this growing awareness, our systems have not kept pace. Many neurodivergent individuals continue to face unmet needs and structural barriers. Incremental change is no longer sufficient. What's needed now is a fundamental shift across all levels of government and public services, backed by meaningful investment and a smarter use of resources to ensure that neurodivergent people receive the support they need. This means:

- **Challenging societal perceptions** and dismantling stigma.
- **Embedding awareness of neurodiversity** and strengthening understanding.
- **Expanding early intervention provision** to provide timely and needs led support.
- **Improving support options for neurodivergent individuals who self-identify** or are impacted by delays in diagnostic services.
- **Redesigning and streamlining assessment pathways** to improve accessibility and timely access.

Now is the time for action. A system that fails to recognise and support neurodivergent individuals is a system in need of urgent transformation. Together, we must commit to real change, one that fosters inclusion, equity, and opportunity for all.



Transforming Lives

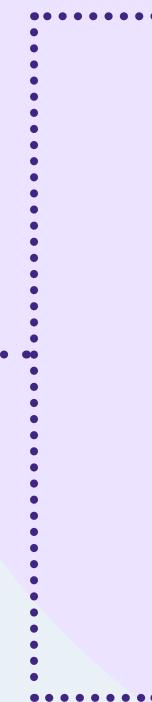
Councillor Angela Coleman Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Councillor Liz Parsons Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services are pleased to support Liverpool's Neurodiversity Strategy.

"The Liverpool Neurodivergent Strategy will have a truly transformative effect on thousands of lives in our city. We have listened carefully to what people with lived experience or an understanding of neurodivergence have to say, and they have influenced this important strategy. We are determined that it becomes a truly meaningful tool for decision makers."

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Councillor Angela Coleman



Councillor Liz Parsons

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Our Commitment

We will take bold action to address the inequalities experienced by neurodivergent people, their families, and carers. Our focus will be on deepening community understanding, removing systemic barriers and working collaboratively across all sectors to build a Liverpool that truly values and embraces neurodiversity.

Our ambition is to build an inclusive city, one where neurodivergent individual can live, learn, work, and participate in their communities with dignity, respect, and support. This strategy represents a vital step toward that vision, aligning with ongoing work across Cheshire and Merseyside to improve our collective approach to neurodiversity and maximise our resources.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this journey so far. While we recognise that meaningful change takes time, we are confident that through the collective efforts of Liverpool City Council, the NHS, neurodivergent individuals, their families, and our partners, we can and will make change happen.



**Anne Marie Lubanski,
Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director
of Adult Care and Health, Liverpool City Council**



**Anthony Leo,
Place Director for Liverpool,
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside**

Statements of Support

"I am really pleased to support the first Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategy. It is an important step towards a fair and inclusive Liverpool. It has been great to see Neurodivergent people and professionals coming together to share their experience and ideas. There is already a lot of energy and commitment to make a difference through the actions set out in this strategy. One day we will look back with pride at how much Neurodivergent lives in this city have changed for the better."



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Jason Oxley,
Director of Adult Social Care Operations
Co-Chair of Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership

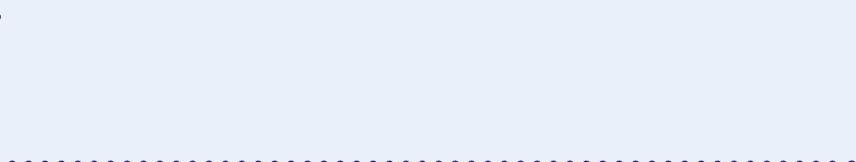


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Sarah Thwaites,
CEO of Healthwatch Liverpool & Co-Chair of
Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership

"At Healthwatch we have long heard Neurodivergent people's difficulties about services and systems that aren't accessible for them. And worse their frustration when they ask for adaptations and nothing happens.

For the first time we have everyone (both Neurodivergent people and services) working together to ensure neurodivergent people's voices are heard in order to influence positive change."



Executive summary

Introduction

Liverpool is proud to set out a bold and inclusive vision for neurodiversity. This strategy is shaped by lived experience and guided by the social model of disability. It recognises that every brain works differently and that neurodivergence is a natural and valuable part of human difference. Our goal is to remove barriers and build environments where neurodivergent people are respected, supported, and celebrated.

The Need for Change

Neurodivergent people make up a significant part of our community, yet many face long waits for diagnosis, limited access to support and systemic barriers in education, employment, health and social care. Incremental change is no longer enough. We need a fundamental shift, that is proactive, inclusive and co-designed with neurodivergent individuals and their families.

Our Vision

A society that recognises, understands and embraces neurodiversity, where neurodivergent people are empowered to live well and pursue their own version of a fulfilling life. Making Liverpool a great place to live, study, work and visit.

Our Priorities

We will work towards delivering the following priorities:

1. Embracing Neurodiversity

We will build a more inclusive and understanding society by raising awareness of neurodiversity and the barriers faced by neurodivergent people and their families. This includes recognising the additional challenges experienced by individuals from diverse backgrounds, such as stigma, underrepresentation and limited access to support.

Key actions include:

- Working alongside neurodivergent people to challenge stereotypes and celebrate different ways of thinking.
- Making information clear, accessible, and easy to find at every life stage.
- Supporting local businesses to adopt inclusive practices and value neurodivergent strengths.
- Strengthening understanding in early years and education settings to provide the appropriate support and improve learning experiences and wellbeing.
- Equipping health and care staff with inclusive training that meets national standards.
- Delivering trauma-informed support for under-reached communities, including those facing multiple disadvantages.

These actions will help ensure that all neurodivergent people, regardless of background are seen, heard and supported in ways that recognise their strengths and meet their needs.

2. Early Intervention and Needs Led Support

We will improve access to timely, inclusive support for neurodivergent people by strengthening early identification and enhancing needs led support across education, health and care.

Key actions include:

- Strengthen early identification and intervention across education, health, and care by equipping mainstream settings to support neurodivergent children and young people.
- Ensure support is based on individual needs, with professionals applying the SEND Graduated Approach to deliver timely, appropriate help in the most suitable setting.
- Developing a streamlined, needs led pathway for neurodiversity for children and young people.
- Improving adult autism services and strengthening crisis prevention support for those at risk of hospital admission or placement breakdown.
- Advocating for policy changes that recognise self-identification, helping remove barriers and ensure support is based on individual needs.

These steps will help create a more responsive and inclusive system, ensuring neurodivergent people receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

3. Accessible Health and Care

We will ensure health and care services are inclusive, responsive, and tailored to the diverse needs of neurodivergent people. Many individuals experience heightened anxiety, sensory sensitivities, or communication differences, which must be recognised and tailored support provided to deliver safe and effective care.

Key actions include:

- Making care person-centred, with reasonable adjustments such as sensory-friendly environments, flexible appointments, and accessible communication.
- Strengthening integration across health, education, social care, and the voluntary sector to deliver joined-up support.
- Improving access to therapies like Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy.
- Aligning neurodiversity and mental health services to close gaps and promote co-produced, trauma-informed approaches.
- Expanding inclusive health initiatives, including screening, vaccination, and lifestyle programmes.
- Reducing reliance on inpatient care by developing high-quality, community-based support.
- Using insights from LeDeR reviews to improve safety, coordination, and outcomes.

These steps will help build a health and care system that is equitable, person centred, and truly inclusive for neurodivergent individuals.

4. Right to a Fulfilling Life

We will support neurodivergent people to live with dignity, pursue their interests, and access opportunities that promote independence and wellbeing. While not everyone will need the same level of support, for those who do, it must be available at the right time in the right environment.

Key actions include:

- Supporting early and personalised transitions into adulthood, including planning for housing, education, employment, and finances.
- Enhancing employment pathways through career guidance, supported internships, and lifelong learning. Working with employers to promote inclusive workforce practices and create meaningful job opportunities.
- Developing inclusive housing solutions that reflect sensory and environmental needs, including specialist options for those with higher support needs.

These actions will help ensure that neurodivergent individuals can lead fulfilling lives, with the support they need to flourish.

5. Working Differently

We will transform how services are designed and delivered by placing lived experience at the heart of decision making. Co-production with neurodivergent individuals and families is essential to creating a truly inclusive system.

Key actions include:

- Co-designing services with neurodivergent people, using data, research, and digital tools to shape responsive support.
- Strengthening peer support and advocacy networks to empower individuals and influence policy.
- Planning for future demand and improving data quality to better understand and meet needs.
- Partnering with academic institutions to address inequalities and inform evidence based policies.
- Engaging underserved communities to ensure approaches reflect diverse lived experiences.
- Advocating for systemic change and sustainable investment at local and national levels.
- Adapting services using emerging evidence and technologies and continuously evaluating progress through feedback.

These steps will help build a system that is inclusive, equitable, and shaped by those it serves.

Measuring Success

What success looks like for Neurodivergent People in Liverpool.

- 1. Acceptance & Inclusion:** Living in a city that embraces neurodivergence and where people feel valued and included.
- 2. Access to Support:** Timely access to appropriate support, including information, diagnostics, and assistance in school, work, or community settings.
- 3. Opportunities & Growth:** Access to opportunities to develop skills, pursue interests, and achieve personal goals.
- 4. Positive Relationships:** Building strong, supportive relationships with family, friends, and peers.
- 5. Autonomy:** Feeling empowered to make choices and live an active, meaningful life.
- 6. Health & Wellbeing:** Access to healthcare that meets the specific needs of neurodivergent individuals and supports their overall health.
- 7. Family Support:** Families feeling informed, supported, and connected to resources and other families with similar experiences.

Accountability and Oversight

The Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership will lead delivery and monitor progress. In the first year, we will co-develop measures to track success, reviewing them annually to support continuous learning and improvement.

Conclusion

This strategy is a commitment to meaningful change. It recognises neurodiversity as a strength and sets out clear actions to improve support, inclusion and opportunity. By working together across services, sectors and communities, we will build a city where neurodivergent people are empowered to flourish, contribute and live well.

Introduction

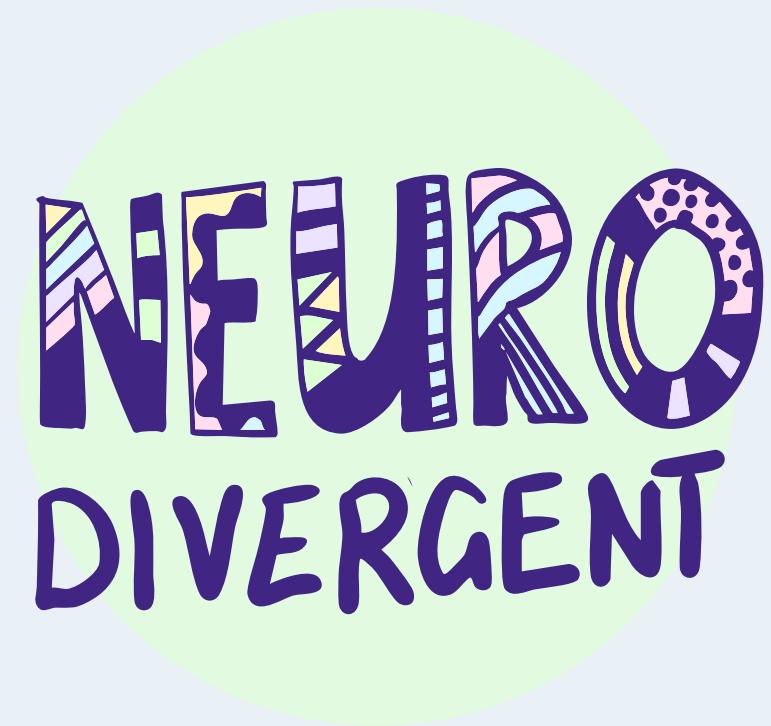
Neurodiversity is the understanding that everyone's brain works differently and that these differences are a natural and normal part of being human³. It emphasises that variations in how people think, learn, or process information are not problems or flaws but they are part of the diverse ways individuals experience the world⁴.

This strategy is guided by the social model of disability⁵⁻⁶, which focuses on removing barriers in society such as inaccessible environments, discriminatory attitudes and inadequate policies, so that everyone has equal opportunities to flourish. Rather than expecting individuals to change to fit systems, we aim to change systems to work for everyone.

Our aspiration is to promote a neuroaffirming and strengths-based perspective of neurodivergence. This means recognising the real challenges many neurodivergent people face by understanding the lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals and their families from all backgrounds and cultures.⁷

A neuroaffirming approach requires cultural and systemic change. It means embedding inclusive policies, removing barriers to support, and valuing lived experience whether someone has a formal diagnosis or self-identifies as neurodivergent.

There is also a strong economic case for change. Providing the right support not only improves outcomes for individuals but also leads to more efficient public spending.³⁷ Advocating for policies that improve access, reduce inequalities and promote inclusion at every level of society is essential. This requires commitment to policy change and investment in infrastructure to support neurodivergent individuals in meaningful ways, paving the way for a truly neuroinclusive society.



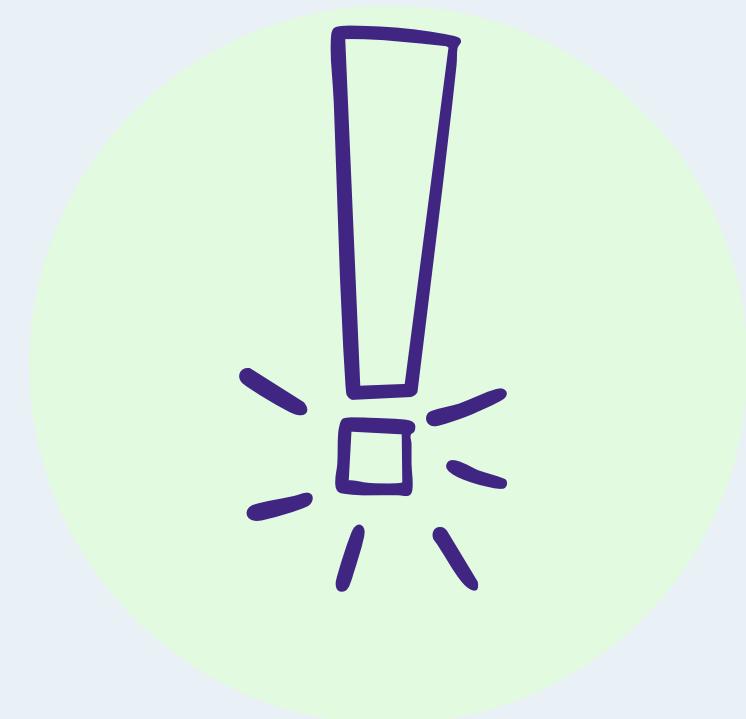
It is estimated that 1 in 7 people are neurodivergent⁵, which translates to approximately 72,700 people in Liverpool. However, the actual number is likely much higher due to barriers to diagnosis, late diagnoses, and underdiagnosis⁹⁻¹⁰.

Neurodivergent conditions include Autism, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia and Tourette's Syndrome⁸.

Why Neurodiversity is a Priority

International research shows that neurodivergent people face stark inequalities across multiple aspects of life:

- **Health Outcomes:** Neurodivergent people experience significantly poorer health outcomes. Preventable illnesses that affect the general population are more likely to lead to premature death among neurodivergent people.
¹⁰⁻¹²
- **Employment:** Chronic under-employment remains a significant challenge for neurodivergent individuals.
¹¹⁻¹³
- **Mental Health:** Higher rates of mental health issues are reported among neurodivergent people. With self-criticism, internalised stigma, impacting their self-worth and every discrimination playing a pivotal role in determining their mental health outcomes, resulting in significantly higher rates of suicide, anxiety and depression compared to their neurotypical peers.
¹⁶⁻²⁰
- **Substance Misuse:** Higher rates of lifetime substance misuse are reported amongst neurodivergent people compared to neurotypicals.
²¹⁻²²



- **Abuse:** Neurodivergent people experience higher rates of common sexual abuse and hate crime than the general population. Further to this, they are less likely to talk about their experiences or report it to the police.²³⁻²⁴
- **Homelessness:** There are significantly higher rates of neurodivergent homeless people than general population.²⁵
- **Quality of Life:** Neurodivergent individuals consistently report lower scores across quality-of-life measures.²⁴
- **Crime:** Unmet neurodevelopmental needs can increase vulnerability to involvement in criminality, both as victims and as perpetrators. When these needs go unrecognised, misinterpretations of behaviour and lack of awareness of neurodivergent conditions can lead to unfair arrests and treatment within the justice system²⁷.

In response to these alarming disparities, Liverpool has created this strategy, the first Liverpool neurodiversity all-age strategy to address these issues holistically. The goal is to ensure that neurodivergent people and their families have the same opportunities as their neurotypical peers, live in a society that values their contributions, have access to timely and appropriate support when needed to live well and realise their full potential on their own terms.

While progress has been made in supporting neurodivergent individuals and their families, we recognise that much work remains. This strategy represents both a commitment and a crucial first step toward turning our vision of a neuroinclusive society into reality.



Approach to Developing this Strategy

The strategy development has been led by the Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership (LNSP) in consultation with neurodivergent individuals, professionals working with neurodivergent people, their families and carers, and various organisations across Liverpool.

The LSNP was established to provide strategic leadership and work with partners to improve service provision and brings together a wide range of representatives, including:

- Neurodivergent individuals, their families, and carers
- The community, voluntary, and social enterprise sector
- Liverpool City Council
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB
- NHS services
- Education
- Researchers

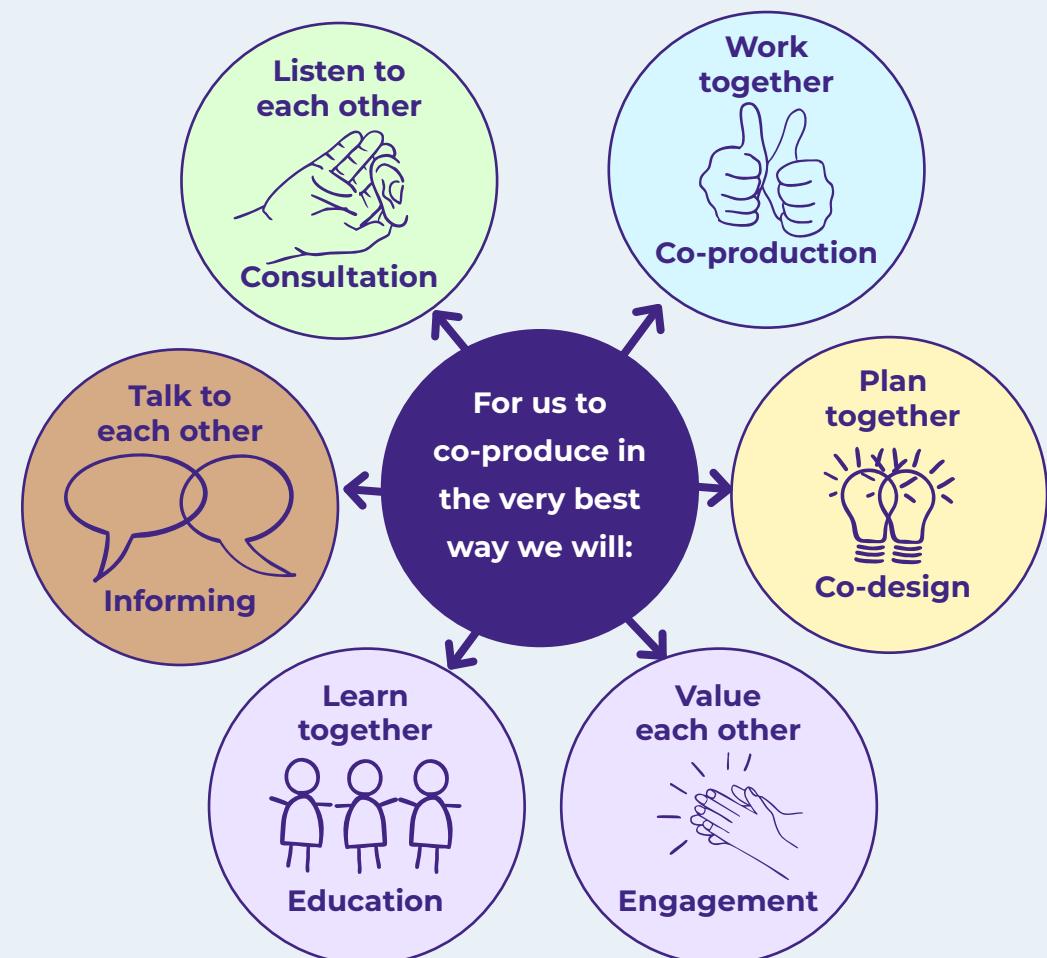


Recognising the importance of co-production, the LNSP has worked with partners across Liverpool to develop a co-production charter. This charter ensures that co-production is embedded at the core of all decision-making processes. The work of the LNSP and the development of this strategy are guided by:

- The social model of disability
- The principles of the Liverpool All Age Co-Production Charter
- The Liverpool Neurodivergent Co-Production Subgroup
- Unheard Voices, a platform offering various accessible ways for neurodivergent individuals to share their experiences, perspectives, and ideas

These initiatives ensure that the voices of neurodivergent individuals, their families and carers are at the heart of the strategy.

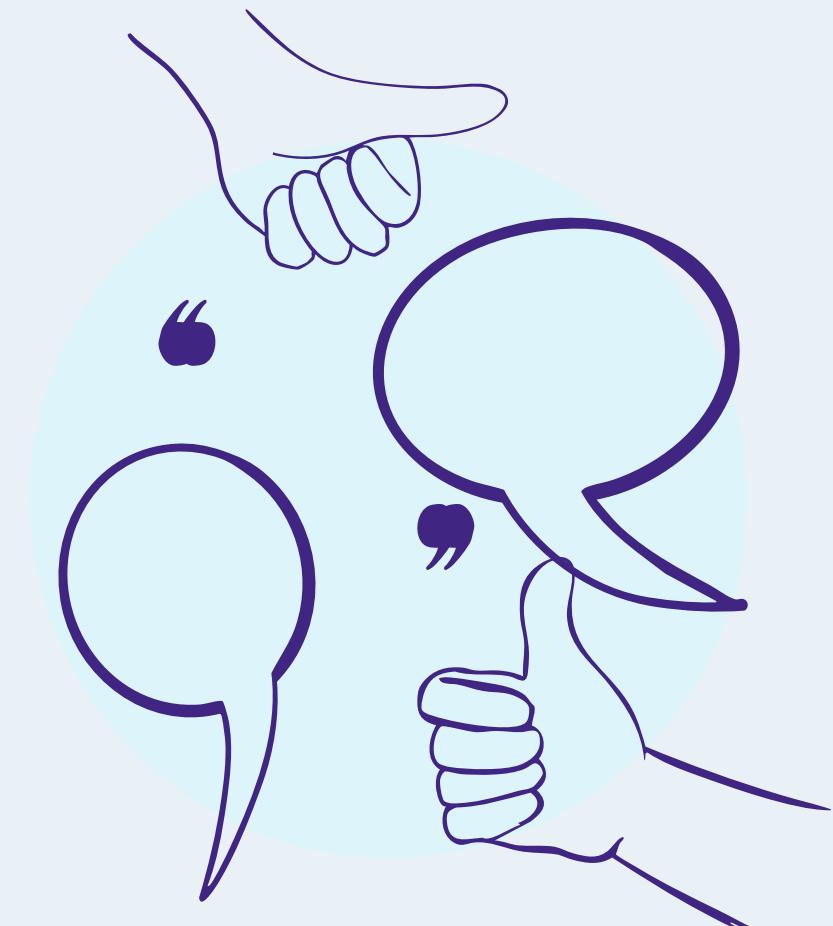
Liverpool All Age Co-Production Charter



Creating the Strategy

Multiple sources of information and perspectives have influenced and shaped the development of this strategy

- A review of national, regional and local strategies and guidance documents.
- Workshops with the Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership and the Liverpool Learning Disabilities Strategic Partnership between May 2023 & March 2025.
- Engagement with people with Lived Experience, through the Liverpool Neurodivergent Co-Production Group and Unheard Voices and the Liverpool Learning Disabilities Lived Experience Group
- Attending existing forums to understand what matters most to Neurodivergent People
- Interviews with stakeholders, include a wide range of representatives from NHS, Local Authority, specialist neurodiversity providers, Healthwatch and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Liverpool.
- Analysis of national and local data particularly in relation to education, health and care, captured within the JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) for Autism, ADHD and Learning Disabilities and the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) JSNA. Recommendations from these JSNAs have been used to inform the development of this strategy.
- A public consultation was conducted between March and May 2025, comprising an online survey and a series of engagement events.



Our Vision

A society that recognises, understands and embraces neurodiversity, where neurodivergent people are empowered to live well and pursue their own version of a fulfilling life. Making Liverpool a great place to live, study, work, and visit.



Our Priorities

Our vision is ambitious, reflecting the bold future we aspire to build. Over the coming years we will work towards achieving this vision by focusing on the following priorities:

- 1. Embracing Neurodiversity** - Liverpool will be a city that truly recognises, understands, and embraces neurodiversity, valuing neurodivergent people from all backgrounds and cultures.
- 2. Early Identification and Needs Led Support** - Neurodivergent individuals and their families will have access to timely, personalised assessments, diagnostic pathways and support. We are committed to creating a system that is inclusive and responsive, ensuring that neurodivergent individual, whether formally diagnosed or self-identified, receive the care and understanding they deserve.
- 3. Accessible Health and Care** - Neurodivergent people will have timely, equitable, and accessible health and care services tailored to their needs. Health, social care, and community services will work together to deliver coordinated, strengths-based support, ensuring individuals receive the right care at the right time.
- 4. Right to a Fulfilling Life** - Neurodivergent people in Liverpool will be empowered to live well, study, work, and build relationships. Ensuring that those who need support to live a fulfilling life can access it without barriers or delay.
- 5. Working Differently** - Services will be co-designed with neurodivergent individuals to meet their unique needs, address inequalities, and provide personalised support. By leveraging data, research, and emerging technologies, services will be responsive and centred around lived experience. Policy changes will be advocated for, systemic barriers reduced and local resources maximised to ensure neurodivergent individuals can thrive in all areas of life.

These priorities are based on feedback from neurodivergent people in Liverpool about what would most improve their lives. They also reflect existing programmes of work, national priorities, and our capacity to deliver meaningful improvements within the strategy's timeframe.

Successful implementation will require collaboration, embracing new approaches and ensuring neurodivergent people are actively involved and central to co-producing solutions that drive positive change.



Understanding Neurodiversity

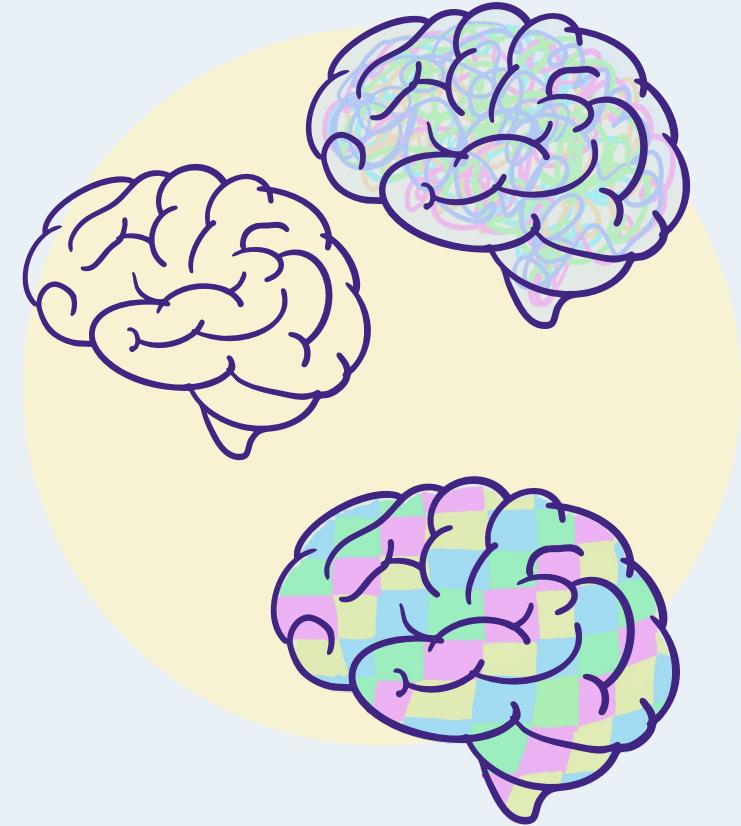
Neurodiversity describes how people experience and interact with the world around them in different ways. There is no single “right” way of thinking, learning, or behaving, and difference should be valued and viewed positively².

The language used to describe neurodiversity is dynamic and continuously evolving to reflect society’s growing understanding of people’s diverse neurological experiences.

Language and terminology matter. Among the neurodivergent community and stakeholders we have engaged with, there is a noticeable shift in attitudes toward the terminology used to describe neurodivergence, focusing on neuro-affirming language.

This shift moves away from viewing neurodivergence as a disorder or deficit, and instead recognises it as a natural variation in brain function that shapes how individuals receive, process, and respond to information. At the same time, it acknowledges the challenges associated with lifelong neurological conditions and the varying levels of support people may need to navigate a neurotypical society.

“Language used positively supports people to express who they are and their differences, while enabling access to the support they need. Used negatively, it can isolate, create barriers, discriminate, and undermine a person’s confidence and sense of self-worth.”¹



Neurodivergence in the UK

It is estimated that 1 in 7 people (more than 15% of people in the UK) are neurodivergent, although with an increase in awareness and late diagnosis this is likely to be much higher. Some studies suggest it could be as high as 20% of the population.⁸

Neurodivergent conditions include Autism, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia and Tourette's Syndrome.

Challenges Experienced by Neurodivergent People

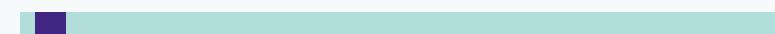
Neurodivergence can influence how individuals experience and navigate the world, especially in systems and services that are often designed with limited consideration for different neurotypes. As a result, neurodivergent people may experience additional challenges, such as:

- **Sensory processing differences** - sensitivity to noise, lighting, textures, or materials in the environment
- **Social communication and interaction styles** - which may differ from neurotypical norms
- **Strong or focused interests and routines** - which can be deeply meaningful and regulating
- **Co-occurring mental health conditions** - such as anxiety or depression

In the UK, it is estimated that:



10% of population are thought to have dyslexia²⁹



Between 2% and 6% of children have dyspraxia³⁰



6% of primary school aged children have dyscalculia³¹



1 to 2% of children and 1.1% of adults are autistic³²



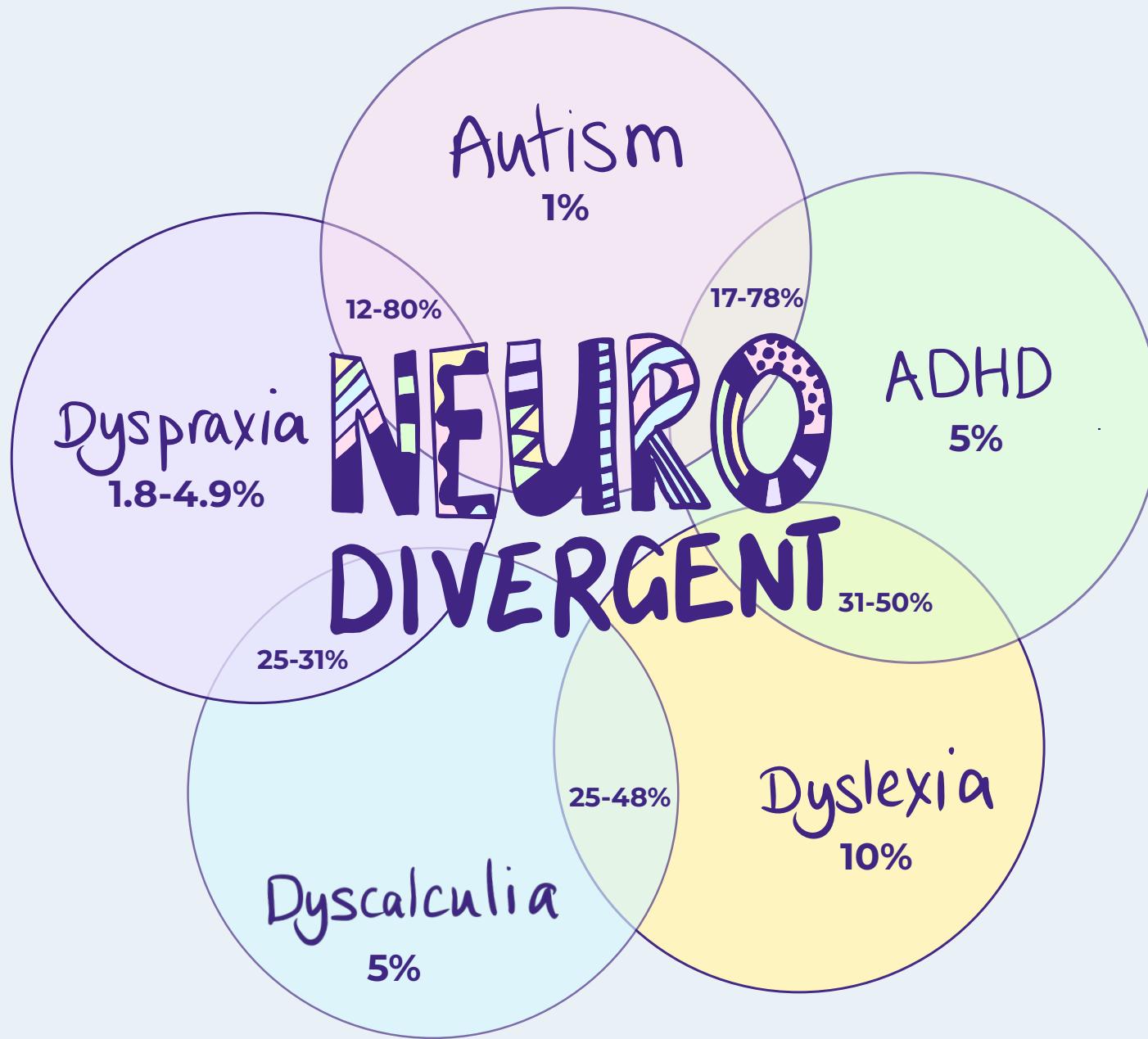
3% to 4% of adults have ADHD and 5% of children have ADHD³³



1 in 100 children and more than 300,000 children and adults live with Tourette's Syndrome³⁴

- **Eating differences** - including disordered eating or sensory-based food preferences
- **Crisis responses** - sometimes referred to as “meltdowns” or “shutdowns”
- **Unique learning styles** - which may not align with traditional educational approaches
- **Attention regulation** - challenges with sustaining focus or managing distractions
- **Energy regulation** - including hyperactivity, impulsiveness, or fatigue – such as anxiety or depression





Source: Liverpool Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2024.²

Barriers to Equity for Neurodivergent Individuals

Neurodivergent people may encounter obstacles that limit their ability to access equitable experiences across many areas of life, including:

- Education and employment
- Social, leisure, retail, cultural, and religious opportunities within their local communities
- Feelings of isolation and/or loneliness
- Accessing health and care services
- Navigating digital technologies and services
- Safety concerns, including increased vulnerability to crime and abuse

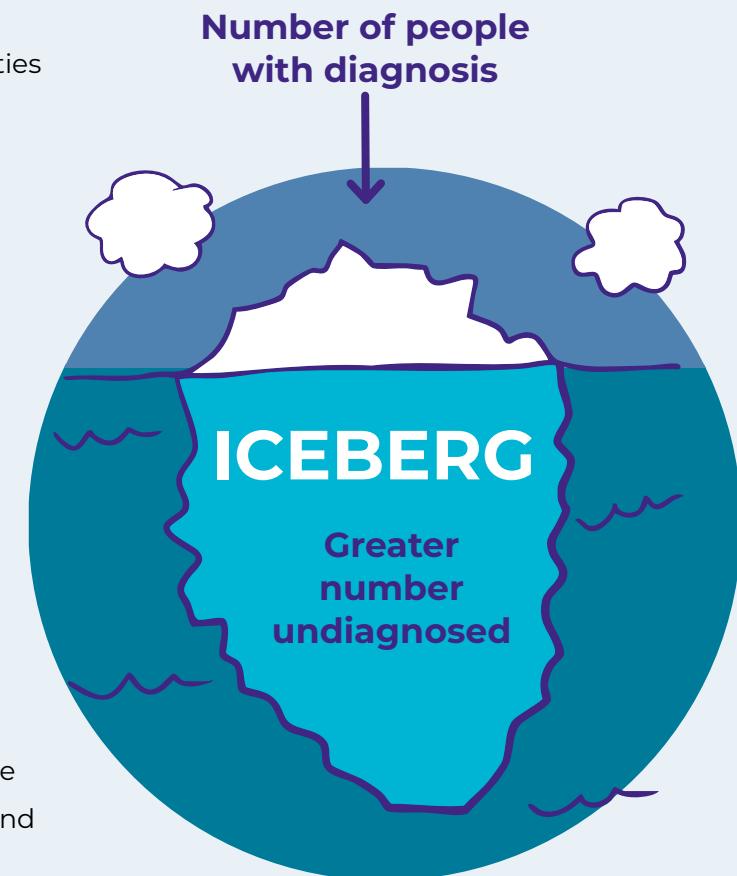
Some neurodivergent individuals experience poorer health outcomes and face a significantly increased risk of premature death compared to their neurotypical peers. Many do not have a formal diagnosis, some wait years, while others may never receive one, which can make accessing appropriate support more difficult.

Recognising and responding to the needs and preferences associated with a person's neurotype is essential for meaningful engagement with education, health, and care professionals. This understanding can lead to more inclusive practices and improved outcomes.²⁰

Self-Identification and Formal Diagnosis

Assessment and diagnostic services for neurodivergent individuals are under considerable strain, with demand far exceeding available capacity. As a result, many people face long and often unacceptable waiting times.

Gender disparities further complicate access: women and girls are consistently underdiagnosed due to societal expectations and stereotypes about neurodivergent traits. Cultural stigma, particularly within Black, Asian, and other minoritised communities, can lead to denial, isolation, or lack of recognition, preventing individuals from receiving support.



A significant number of neurodivergent people remain undiagnosed. However, their need for support is no less valid. Access to services, reasonable adjustments, and inclusive environments should not depend solely on a formal diagnosis.

Recognition Beyond Diagnosis

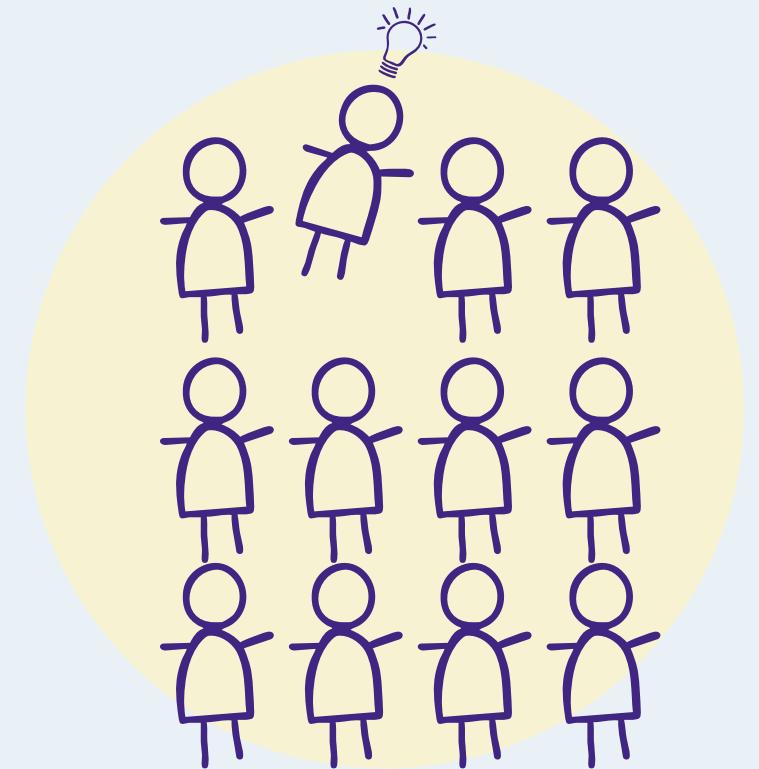
Understanding and support should not depend solely on a formal diagnosis. For those who pursue one, a diagnosis can offer clarity, enhance self-awareness, and unlock access to vital support in education, employment, and healthcare.²⁰

For many, self-identification is a meaningful and empowering process. It helps individuals better understand themselves, develop coping strategies, and advocate for their needs. It also provides an alternative for those facing barriers to diagnosis, such as long wait times or systemic inequities. Yet despite its value, self-identification is often not formally recognised, limiting access to necessary support.³⁶

This strategy acknowledges that neurodivergence is experienced in different ways. Some people self-identify finding validation in personal understanding. Others seek a diagnosis for clarity or access to services. And some, even with a diagnosis, may not fully relate to it due to personal or cultural reasons.

To build a truly inclusive system, support must not rely solely on clinical validation. Lived experience should be recognised as equally valid and sufficient for understanding and reasonable adjustments. At the same time, for those who need a diagnosis, it must be accessible, timely, and free from bias. Without formal recognition, many neurodivergent individuals continue to face barriers in systems that overlook their needs.

By recognising the varied ways neurodivergence is understood and experienced, this strategy promotes a more inclusive and responsive approach, ensuring that all neurodivergent individuals receive the recognition and adjustments they need, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis.



Neurodivergence in Liverpool

Data Challenges

There is a significant gap in comprehensive data on the health, education, social, and economic outcomes of neurodivergent individuals. This gap becomes even more pronounced when considering how different aspects of identity, such as age, gender, race, and social class, intersect to shape lived experiences and access to support. Without this nuanced understanding, policies and services risk being one size fits all, overlooking the unique barriers faced by those with multiple, overlapping challenges.

Data on neurodevelopmental conditions is not routinely collected or centrally stored at either the local or national level. This makes it difficult to fully understand the needs of neurodivergent people. Much of the available information comes from international and national research studies, supplemented by limited local data. This strategy aims to improve the quality, consistency, and inclusivity of data collection. Ensuring that the diverse needs of neurodivergent individuals in Liverpool are better understood and more effectively supported.



What we do know

1 in 5 pupils in Liverpool schools have a special education need (SEN), significantly above the national average and continues to increase.

12% of autistic people and 4.3% of people with ADHD have a learning disability.

Around 75% of people diagnosed with Autism and ADHD in Liverpool are of white ethnicity.

Around 1.7% (9,330) of people registered with a Liverpool GP have a diagnosis of autism, compared to the England average of 1.2%.

1.25% (6,995) of people registered with a Liverpool's GP have a diagnosis of ADHD compared to the England average of 1%.

Liverpool has the highest rates of autistic children and children with significant learning difficulties in England.

3 in 10 (30.1%) neurodivergent adults in Merseyside experienced 4+ ACEs, compared to one in ten (9.8%) neurotypical adults.

Over 7 in 10 (73.5%) neurodivergent adults in Merseyside had at least one ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences), compared to just under half (48.1%) of neurotypical adults.

Autism diagnoses have doubled over the last 10 years and is currently the most prevalent need for children with SEN in Liverpool.

A third of Children in Need in Liverpool are autistic.

Liverpool
has a total population of
508,961
people

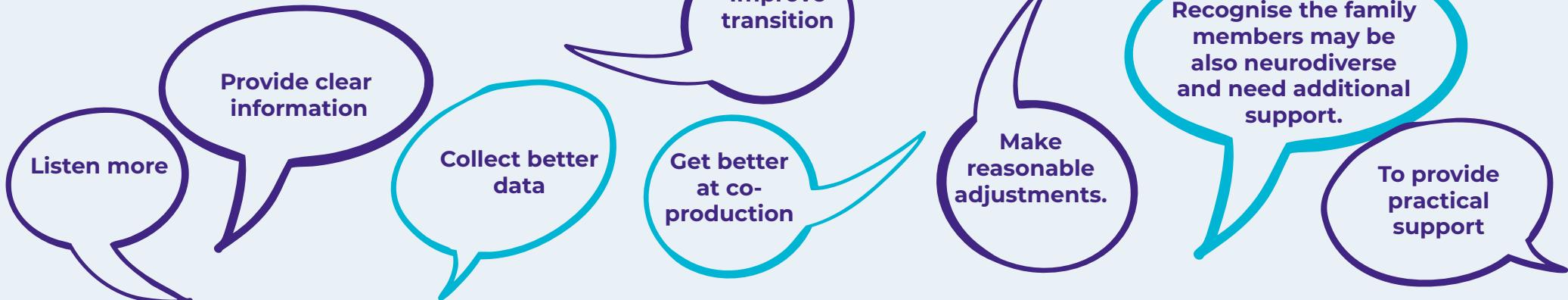
70% of autistic people and 54% of people with ADHD in Liverpool have one other co-occurring health condition, depression being the most common.

What Neurodivergent People and their Families have told us

Through open and honest conversations, neurodivergent individuals, families, and carers have helped us better understand the everyday realities they face. Many shared how navigating support systems can feel overwhelming, especially when professionals lack understanding of neurodivergence, overlook the importance of family and carer perspectives, or fail to involve them meaningfully in planning and decision-making.

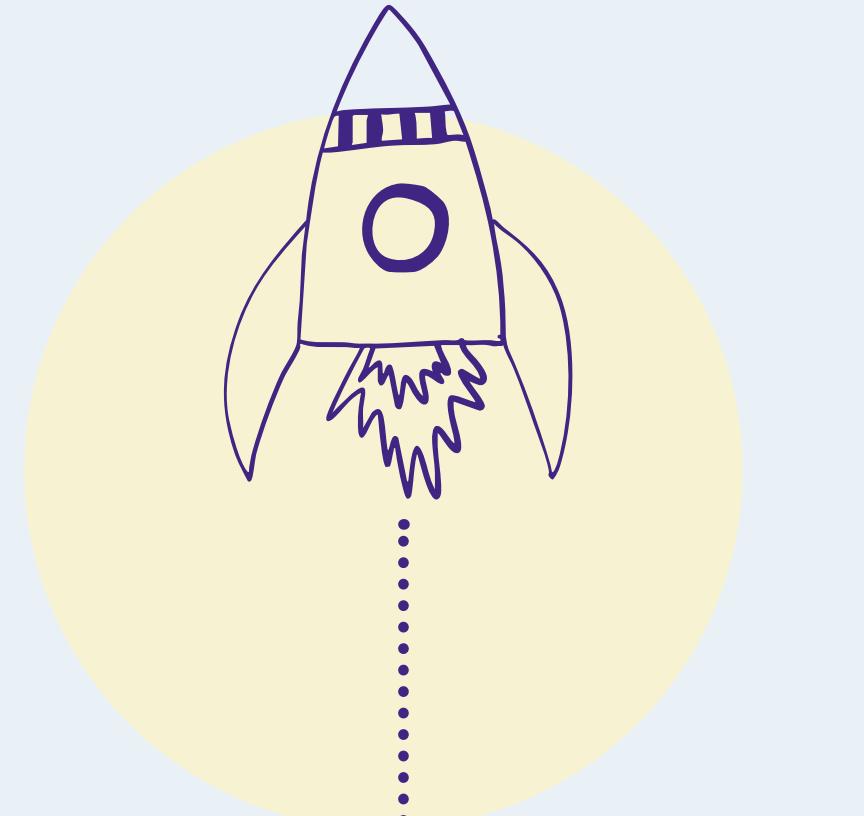
Some spoke of the frustration of being unable to access a diagnosis or appropriate support, despite repeated efforts. Others described moments of feeling misunderstood, excluded, or simply exhausted from having to explain themselves repeatedly to services that don't always listen or respond to their needs.

You have told us we need to:



From Vision to Action

We will work closely with a wide range of partners to make meaningful progress across five key priorities. These priorities have been shaped by listening to neurodivergent people, as well as professionals working in education, employment, housing, health and care. Their insights have helped us understand what matters most and where change is needed to create more inclusive, accessible and supportive environments for everyone.



Priority 1. Embracing Neurodiversity

What we know

Raising awareness of neurodiversity and the barriers faced by neurodivergent people and their families is essential for building a more understanding and inclusive society.

Many neurodivergent individuals, especially those from diverse backgrounds and cultures, face additional challenges such as stigma, lack of representation, and difficulty accessing appropriate support.

By creating environments that are informed, inclusive, and responsive, we can ensure that all neurodivergent people regardless of background are seen, heard, and supported in ways that recognise their strengths and meet their needs.

What you have told us

School wise teachers shouting at me for absolutely no reason and being misunderstood, upsets me. Makes life difficult.
(Female aged 11, ADHD)

My foster parent didn't understand all my needs. They thought I was a naughty girl and disrespectful. Had me down as an attention seeker - they didn't see the way I was as a symptom of my ADHD and autism. They didn't acknowledge my diagnosis at all.
(Young Person)



There has to be a greater understanding of neurodivergence in education setting and social care.
(Neurodivergent Adult and Carer)

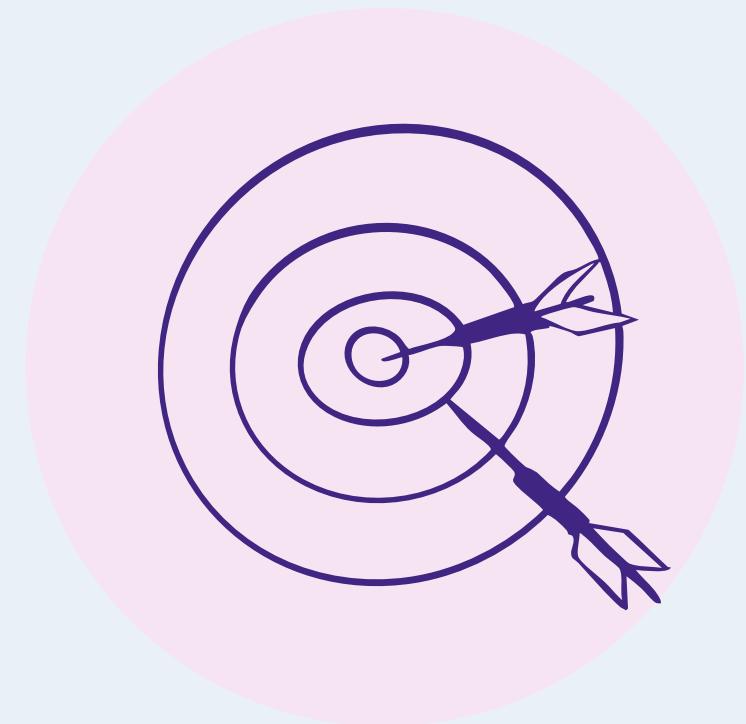
A frustrating part of being autistic is that people, even health professionals, expect us all to have the same sensitivities. We aren't all the same yet can often be treated that way.
(Autistic Adult)

Our ambition

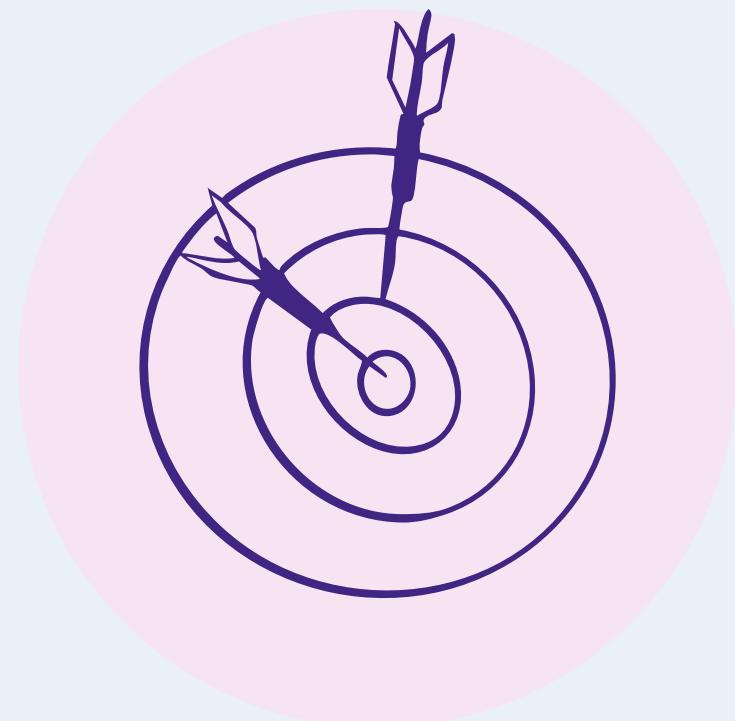
Liverpool will be a city that truly recognises, understands and embraces neurodiversity, valuing neurodivergent people from all backgrounds and cultures.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Work alongside neurodivergent people to build better understanding** by challenging stereotypes, reducing stigma, and celebrating different ways of thinking and experiencing the world.
- **Make information easy to find and understand for neurodivergent people and their families.** This includes clear guidance on what neurodivergence means and what support is available at every stage of life.
- **Work with local businesses to build understanding of neurodivergence and celebrate the unique strengths neurodivergent people bring to the workplace.** Promoting reasonable adjustments and inclusive practices, to increase job opportunities and help neurodivergent individuals feel supported and valued at work.
- **Work collaboratively with families, schools, and local services to strengthen understanding of neurodivergence in early years and educational settings.** By focusing on individual needs and promoting inclusive practices, to improve learning experiences, wellbeing and reduce school exclusions.



- **Equip health and care staff with training that meets national standards, ensuring they have the skills to deliver safe, compassionate, and inclusive care for neurodivergent people.** This will help build understanding, improve experiences, and embed neuroinclusive practices across services.
- **Deliver trauma-informed training and engagement with services that support under-reached communities,** helping them understand neurodiversity and provide inclusive, respectful care. This includes working with providers supporting vulnerable groups such as children in need, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those facing homelessness, exploitation or in contact with the criminal justice system.



Priority 2. Early Identification and Needs Led Support

What we know

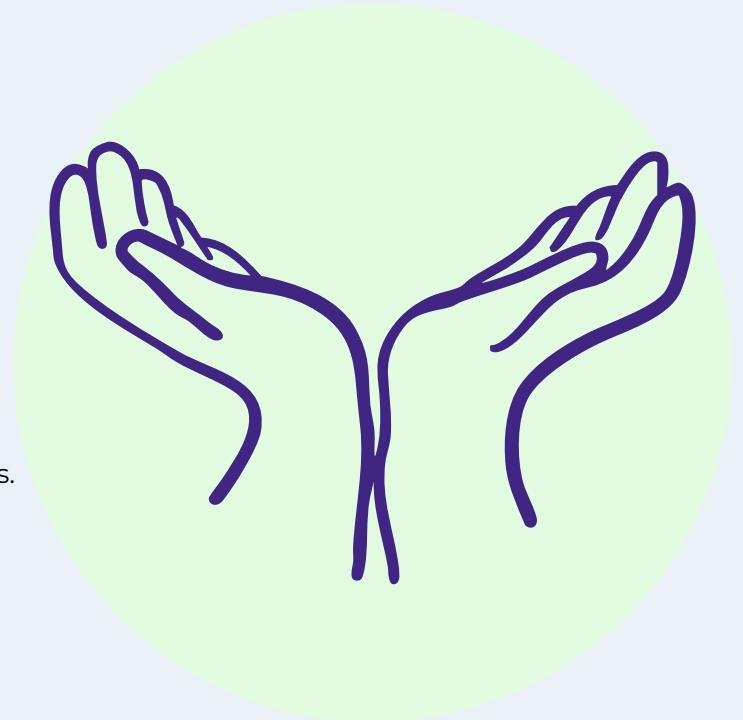
Over the past two decades, awareness and understanding of neurodiversity have grown significantly, contributing to a steady increase in diagnoses each year. However, the actual number of neurodivergent individuals is likely much higher, as many experience late diagnoses or remain undiagnosed altogether.

Services designed to support neurodivergent people are under immense pressure, with demand far exceeding capacity. This has led to long waiting times and critical gaps in community-based support. These challenges are compounded by a global shortage of essential medications and resource allocations that have not kept pace with growing needs.

Early intervention, timely assessments, and needs led support are vital to empowering neurodivergent individuals to reach their full potential. Equally important is ensuring that families are supported, informed, and actively involved throughout the journey.

To truly meet the needs of neurodivergent individuals, we must adopt a neuro-affirming approach, that values lived experience alongside clinical insight. This shift requires systemic, cultural, and policy-level transformation. It calls for advocacy-driven, multi-level strategies that address both practical barriers to accessing services and the broader societal attitudes toward neurodiversity.

This transformation is essential not only to ensure timely diagnoses but to create environments where neurodivergent individuals are equipped with the tools, support, and recognition they need to flourish.



What you have told us

Access to support at school means improving the SEN and EHCP processes... I have experienced this process with both my children. It was incredibly stressful and not accessible for neurodivergent parents navigating such a difficult system.

(Neurodivergent Parent)

Diagnosis needs to be quicker and better. I've been waiting for over a year, and I've only just received a questionnaire from the NHS concerning an initial assessment.

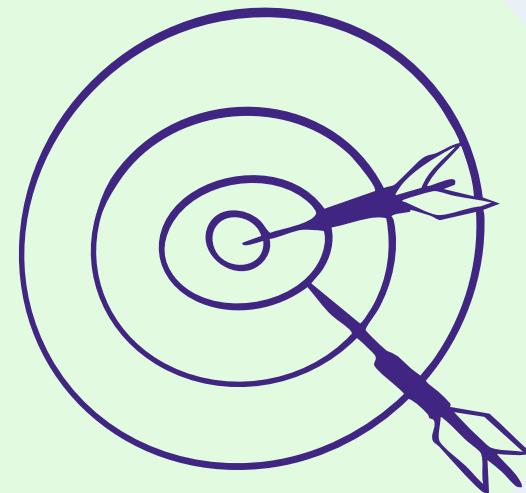
(Autistic Male)

There needs to be consideration for diagnosis, assessment and treatment for adults who have not been diagnosed as children.

(Female with ADHD)

Have been diagnosed and medicated 16 years. There is very little help other than meds and I feel coaching or classes might help alongside this.

(Adult with ADHD and Dyscalculia)

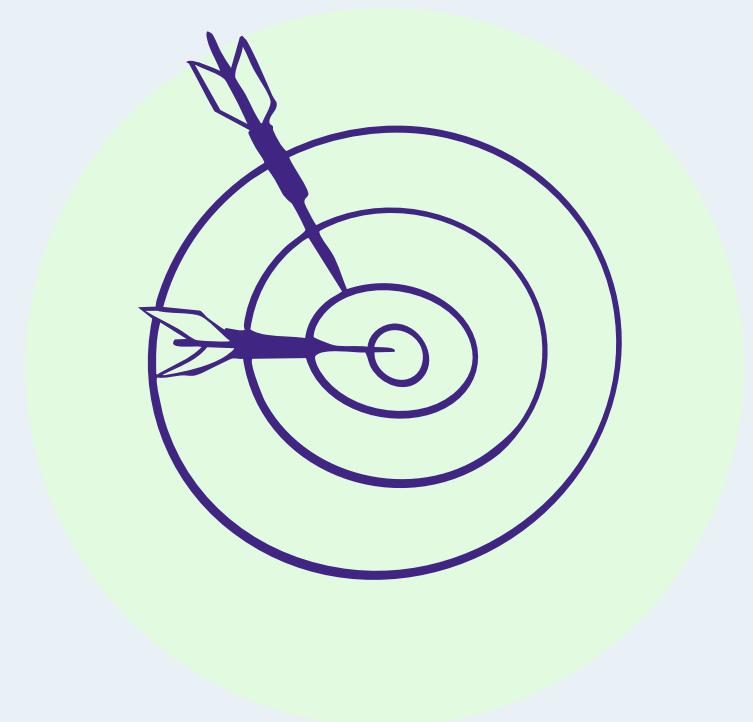


Our Ambition

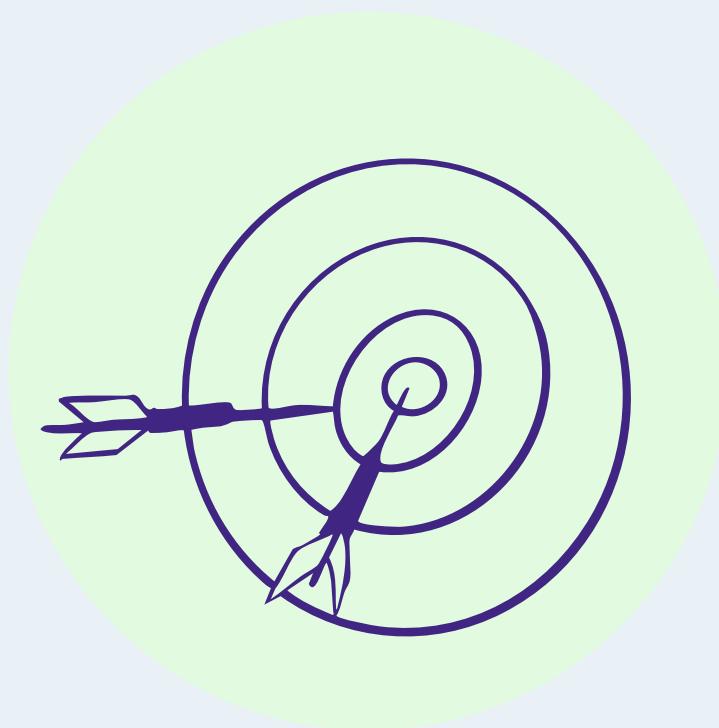
Neurodivergent individuals and their families will have access to timely, personalised assessments and needs led support. We are committed to creating a system that is both inclusive and responsive, ensuring that neurodivergent individuals, whether diagnosed or self-identified, receive the care and understanding they deserve.

To achieve this, we will

- **Strengthen early identification, intervention pathways and expand inclusive provision** by ensuring mainstream education, health, and care settings are equipped to support neurodivergent children and young people. This includes providing help based on individual needs rather than waiting for a formal diagnosis and ensuring all professionals understand and apply the SEND Graduated Approach so that support is timely, appropriate, and delivered in the most suitable setting.
- **Collaborate with partners across Cheshire and Merseyside to develop a streamlined, needs-led neurodiversity pathway.** This pathway will be designed to ensure quicker, more accessible assessments, diagnosis, alongside robust support for children and young people.
- **Promote a Holistic Approach to ADHD Management** includes access to therapy, behavioural strategies, educational support, and lifestyle adjustments. Improve understanding and education around ADHD medication by emphasising that it is a tool not a cure and should be part of a broader personalised care plan that considers the individual's unique needs, strengths, and circumstances.



- **Support smooth transitions to adult services for young people moving from children's services.** Work closely with individuals, their families and neurodivergent providers to offer clear information and ongoing support at each stage of the transition, ensuring that the young person's needs continue to be met effectively
- **Enhance the Liverpool Autism Spectrum Service for Adults.** Work with partners to reduce diagnostic assessment waiting times and establish an Intensive Support Function for autistic individuals who may be at risk of hospital admission or placement breakdown due to behaviours that challenge current support systems. This service will help prevent crises by offering timely, tailored support that responds to individual needs.
- **Advocate for policy changes** that recognise and support self-identification as neurodivergent, not just formal diagnoses. This will help ensure individuals receive support based on their unique needs, removing barriers to access and creating a more inclusive system for all neurodivergent people.



Priority 3. Accessible Health and Care Services

What we know

Neurodivergent individuals may have specific care needs related to their neurodivergence, such as heightened anxiety, sensory sensitivities, or differences in communication. Health and care services must recognise these needs, make reasonable adjustments, and provide tailored support to ensure individuals receive appropriate and effective care.

Without equitable access, neurodivergent people may face delays, misdiagnosis, or inadequate treatment. To address these challenges, health and care professionals need specialised training, flexible communication strategies, sensory-friendly environments, and proactive collaboration with neurodivergent communities.

By embedding these approaches, we can build a more inclusive, equitable, and person-centred health and care system, that truly meets the diverse needs of neurodivergent individuals.

I want to receive information I can understand and access when I need to with the right support.
(Young Person)

Lack of support for young people who are neurodivergent, especially with severe mental health needs.
(Male with ADHD and dyscalculia)



Understanding and reasonable adjustments should be a way of life for every person and organisation in Liverpool.

(Parent of autistic young person and works with neurodivergent people)

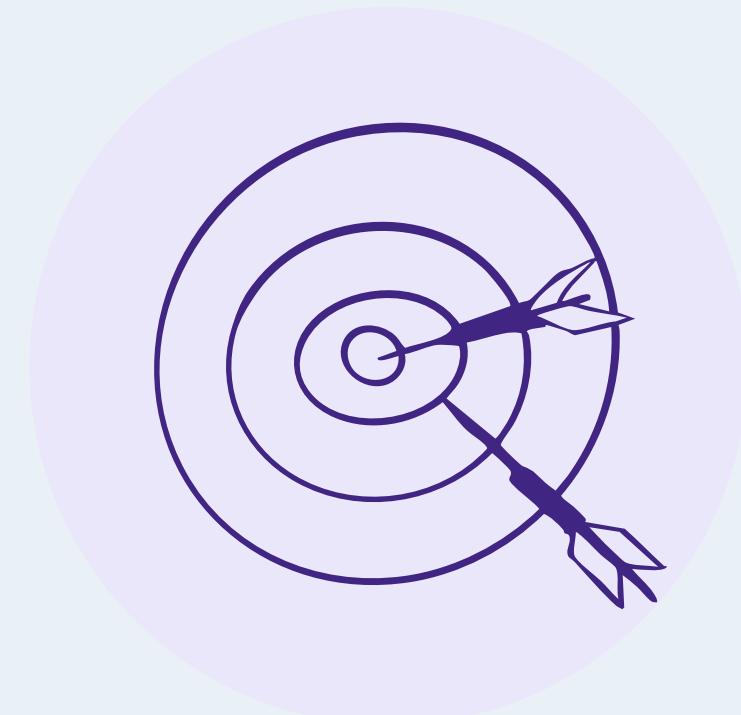
What you have told us

Our Ambition.

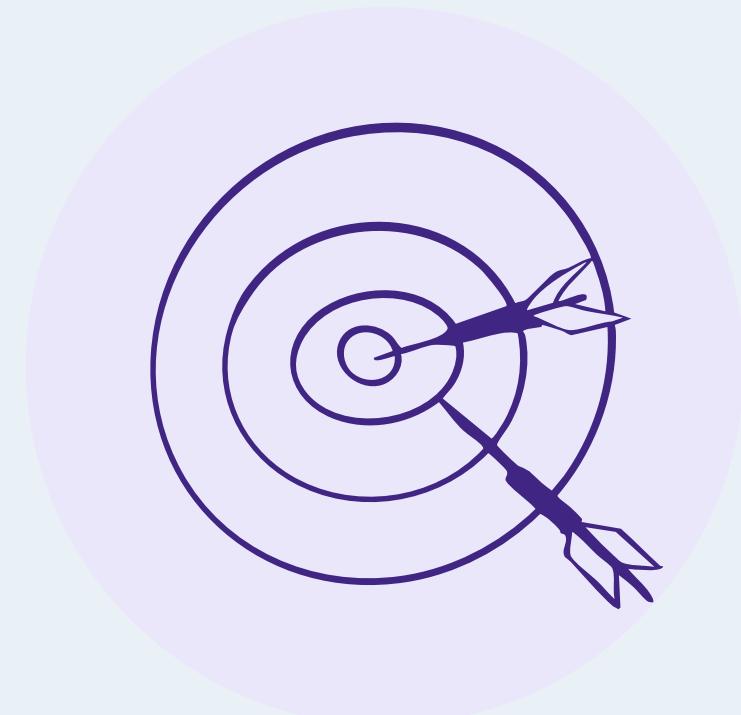
Neurodivergent people will have timely, equitable, and accessible health and care services that are tailored to their needs. Health, social care, and community services will work together to deliver coordinated, strength-based support, ensuring individuals receive the right care at the right time.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Enhance equitable access to health services.** Care must be person-centred, with reasonable adjustments such as accessible communication styles, easy read materials, sensory friendly environments, and flexible appointment lengths to meet individual needs.
- **Strengthen integration and improve coordination between health, social care, education and the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector.** By embedding multidisciplinary team approaches, enhancing data sharing, and delivering joined-up, person-centred care. This will be driven by Liverpool's new neighbourhood model transforming how services are delivered with a focus on proactive and preventative support.
- **Improve timely access to therapies** such as Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to better support neurodivergent individuals' communication, sensory processing, and daily living needs.



- **Enhance integration and system wide alignment between neurodiversity and mental health services across children's and adult services.** By identifying gaps in care pathways and embedding co-produced, neurodiversity informed approaches that promote coordination, responsiveness, and person centred support.
- **Enhance mental health support and therapeutic options for neurodivergent individuals** by adapting services to reflect emerging evidence and best practices. Ensure treatments are personalised, strengths-based, and trauma-informed, recognising the diverse ways neurodivergent people experience and express mental health needs.
- **Improve the uptake of health promotion and protection initiatives** by ensuring neurodivergent individuals can access services such as healthy lifestyle programmes, screening and vaccination.
- **Implement Transforming Care priorities to improve outcomes for children, young people and adults** with learning disabilities and/or a diagnosis of autism who may display behaviours that challenge current support systems, including those with mental health conditions. Focus on reducing reliance on inpatient settings by expanding high-quality, community-based support that is proactive and person-centred.
- **Apply the insights from LeDeR reviews** (Learning from Lives and Deaths) to identify patterns, drive service improvements, and implement safeguarding recommendations from Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards. This will strengthen coordination between neurodivergent specialist services and mental health care, ensuring seamless, safe, and effective support.



Priority 4. Right to a Fulfilling Life

What we know

Everyone deserves the opportunity to live with dignity, pursue their interests, and access education, employment, and good quality housing. While not all neurodivergent people will need the same level of support, for those who do, it is essential that the right help is available in the right environment.

With inclusive services and tailored support, neurodivergent individuals can develop their unique strengths, contribute meaningfully to society, build strong relationships, engage in community life, and experience a genuine sense of belonging. This strategy commits to ensuring that those who need support to live a fulfilling life can access it without barriers or delay.

What you have told us

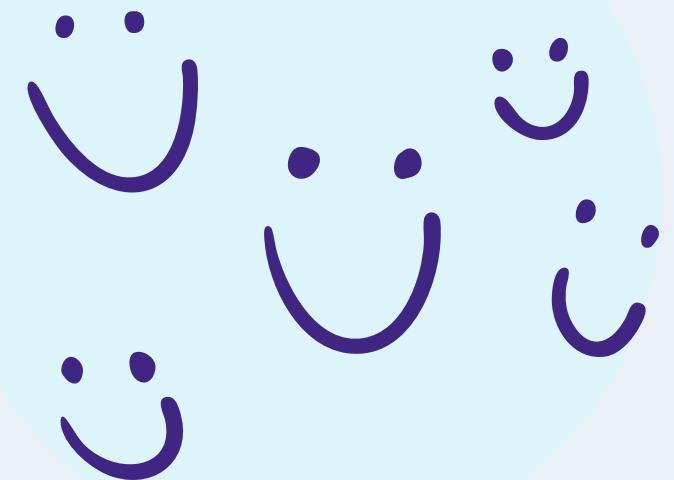
I often find the support available to find and keep work is not tailored to neurodivergent individuals despite their having a huge number of skills to offer. Many neurodivergent people who are struggling to work would benefit from specific work schemes for neurodivergent individuals, with additional, trained support.

(Professional, works with Neurodivergent people)

What would be great is if there were more places I could go to see friends. I just need a calmer and quiet space.
(Young person)

There is no information that tells us about the basic layout to help us to understand if the properties could meet our needs. Leaving us at a significant disadvantage to other non disabled people seeking housing which may need to be adapted for their needs.

(Parent)



Our Ambition

Neurodivergent people in Liverpool will be empowered to live, study, work and build meaningful relationships. With the right support, they will be able to develop their strengths, contribute to society in ways that matter to them, and experience a strong sense of belonging.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Support preparation for adulthood.** Collaborate with children, young people, and their families from the earliest stage to support transitions into adult health and social care services. This includes addressing emerging needs around housing, finances, education, and employment. Transition planning will begin early, be tailored to individual needs, and ensure that all partners meet their statutory responsibilities.
- **Enhance employment pathways and support** by providing career guidance, raising aspirations, and preparing young people in schools for the world of work. This includes early access to employment services and clear career pathways.
- **Expand supported employment opportunities.** Build on successful initiatives such as Supported Internships by offering coaching, mentoring and tailored opportunities. Explore ways to increase resources for individuals over 25 to access employment and lifelong learning.
- **Work with employers to develop inclusive workforce practice and employment opportunities** by promoting training, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurial pathways that reflect and harness the diverse strengths of neurodivergent individuals.
- **Promote inclusive housing solutions.** Collaborate with partners across the Liverpool City Region to develop affordable, accessible housing that considers the sensory and environmental needs of neurodivergent people. This includes expanding both general needs housing and specialist housing options for individuals with higher support needs.

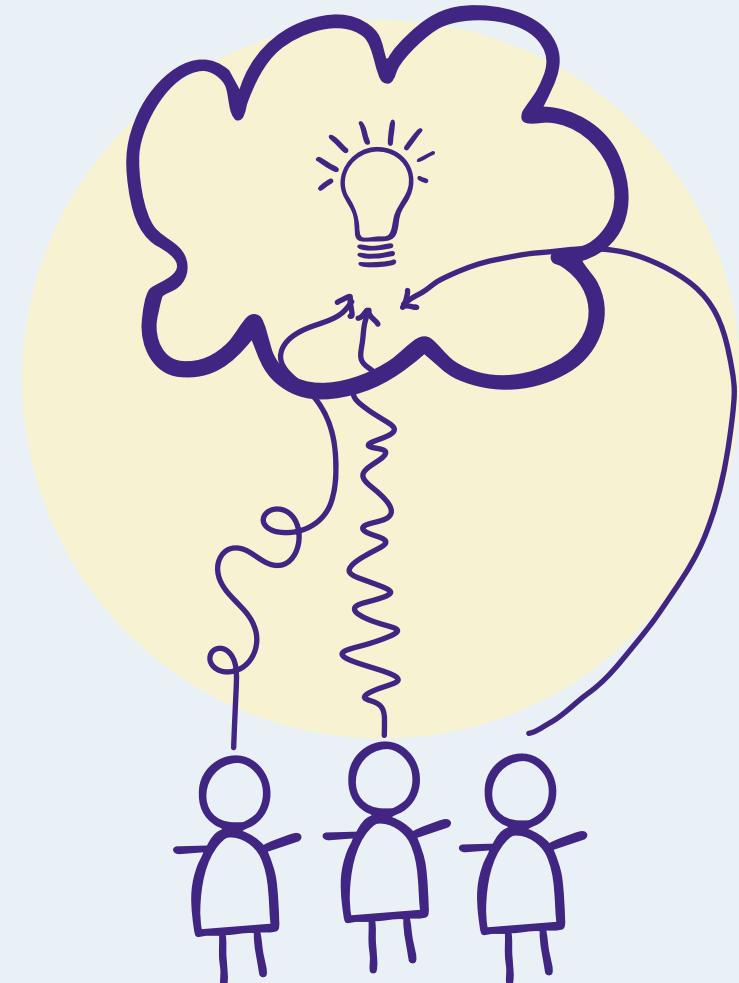
Priority 5. Working Differently

What we know

Creating a truly neuroinclusive society requires a fundamental shift in how we understand, value, and support neurodivergent individuals. Co-production with neurodivergent children, young people, adults, and their families is essential to this transformation. Those with lived experience must be meaningfully involved in the design, delivery, and review of services, policies, and practices, ensuring their voices shape decisions and drive change.

Despite progress, significant gaps remain in our understanding, particularly due to limited data collection, underrepresentation in research, and a lack of insight from under reached communities. Addressing these gaps requires a commitment to richer, more inclusive data, and a deeper understanding of people's lived experiences.

To build a system that truly works for everyone, we must advocate for policies that improve access, remove inequities, and embed inclusion at every level, from local communities to national frameworks. This includes pushing for increased national investment and strategically using local resources to develop sustainable, community based solutions.



What you have told us

If they had interacted with me as well as him, so I could help him understand what was going on, what was happening it would have helped.

(Parent)

There needs to be more suitable placements for those children who can't cope in mainstream schools, but who don't fit the criteria for specialist provision.

(Adult with AuDHD and Carer)

I just need information in a way I can understand, different people explain things in different ways, its complicated but I just try to get on with it."

"It would be good to have an app to plan for what to expect, I like to know what is going to happen, when it will happen and who I will meet. Having a plan is less stressful.

Autistic Young Person with Dyslexia and Dyscalculia age 14

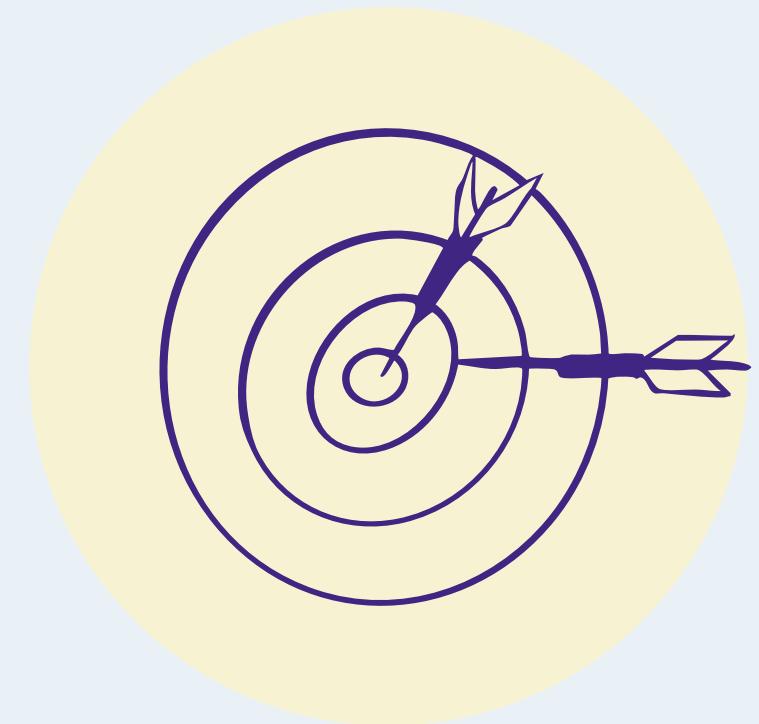
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Our Ambition

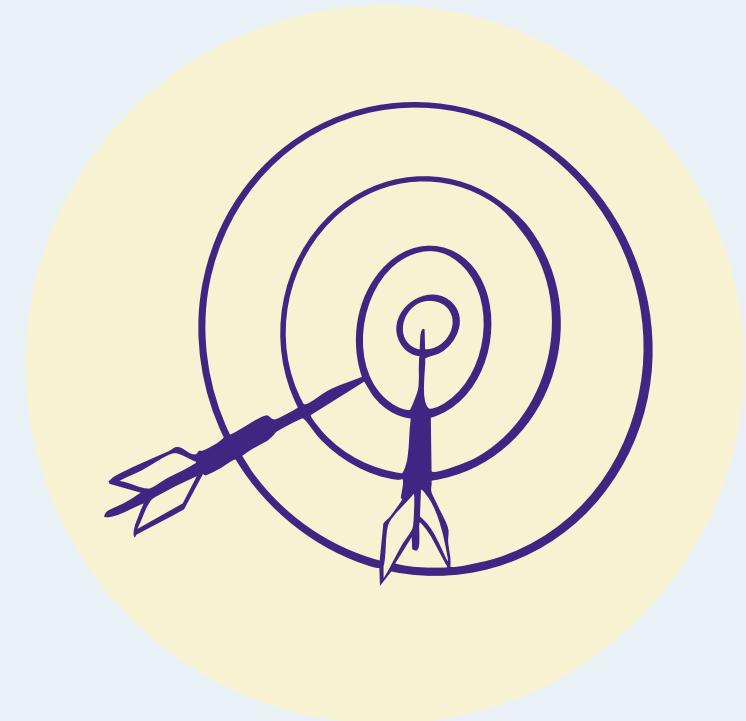
Services will be co-designed with neurodivergent individuals to reflect their unique needs, reduce inequalities, and provide personalised, strengths-based support. Lived experience will be central to shaping services, policies, and practices, ensuring they are inclusive, effective, and grounded in real-world insight.

To support this, we will:

- **Collaborate with neurodivergent individuals, families, and carers to co-design services** that are responsive and inclusive. We will use data, research, and emerging digital tools to ensure services are shaped by those who use them.
- **Strengthen Peer Support and Advocacy.** Establish a network of neurodivergent self-advocates to provide peer support, raise public awareness, and celebrate neurodivergence. This will empower individuals and families to influence service design and policy development.
- **Plan for Future Demand** to meet the needs of neurodivergent individuals, ensuring access to appropriate support, essential health services and social care. This plan should enable the city to respond to growing demand effectively and sustainably.
- **Improve Data Quality and Use** by enhancing the recoding, coding and sharing of data across services to better understand and respond to the needs of neurodivergent people.
- **Partner with academic institutions** to explore the systemic factors contributing to unequal treatment and life outcomes for neurodivergent people. These insights will guide the development of fair, evidence-based policies and inclusive service design.



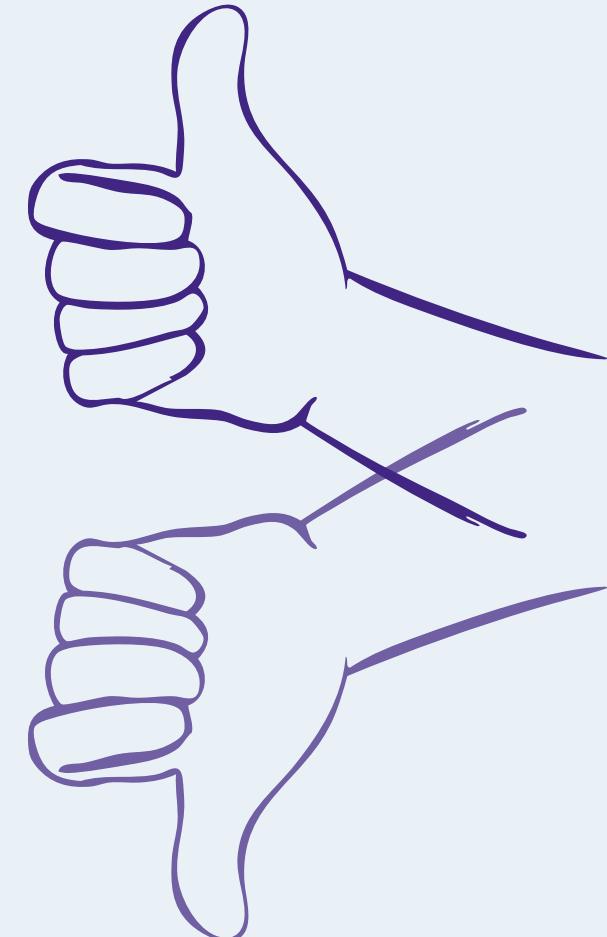
- **Engage directly with underrepresented and under-reached communities**, including children in need, unpaid carers, people experiencing homelessness, individuals from minority ethnic groups, and those in areas of high deprivation, to understand their lived experiences. This will ensure our approaches are shaped by those most affected and tailored to reduce health and social inequalities.
- **Advocate for systemic change** at local, regional, and national levels to remove barriers that prevent neurodivergent people from accessing the support and opportunities they deserve. We will champion increased national investment, explore innovative funding models, and make the most of local resources to deliver sustainable, community-based support.
- **Adapt and evolve services in response to emerging evidence.** We will work with academic and community partners to test and scale new approaches across education, employment, health and social care. Embrace emerging technologies and digital tools to enhance accessibility, independence and inclusion.
- **Monitor and evaluate progress** through continuous feedback from neurodivergent individuals and their families. Our strategies will be refined over time to ensure they remain effective, inclusive, and grounded in lived experience.



Measuring Success

What success looks like for Neurodivergent People in Liverpool

- **Acceptance and Inclusion** - Living in a city that recognises, values, and celebrates neurodiversity where neurodivergent people feel respected, understood and fully included in all areas of life, including education, employment and community life.
- **Access to Support** - Receiving timely, accessible, and appropriate support, such as information, advice, assessments, and tailored assistance in school, work and community settings.
- **Opportunities and Growth** - Having the freedom and support to explore interests, develop skills, and pursue personal goals.
- **Positive relationships** - Building strong, supportive, and meaningful relationships with family, friends and peers.
- **Autonomy** - Being empowered to make informed choices, live independently or with appropriate support, and participate fully in society, in ways that reflect individual strengths, preferences, and needs.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Enjoying good physical and mental health, with access to services that understand and respond to the diverse needs of neurodivergent people.



Accountability and Oversight

Accountability for delivering this strategy will be led by the Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership.

Together, we will monitor progress and ensure meaningful and measurable change. In the first year, we will co-develop a set of measures to track progress against this strategy, reviewing them annually to support continuous learning and improvement.

Appendix 1.

Relevant Legislation and Strategy

Legislation and Statutory Guidance relevant to Neurodiversity in England

Legislation	Content
Mental Health Act (1983)	Legislation relating to the care of people with mental disorders.
Education Reform Act 1988	Introduced key stages and the national curriculum
The Children Act 1989	Places the wellbeing and voice of every child at the centre of decision-making. Section 17 of the act places a duty on Local Authorities to provide services for children in need to safeguard and promote welfare.
The Education Act 1996	Consolidates earlier education laws and sets out the legal framework for education in England.
Mental Capacity Act (2005)	Provides a legal framework for acting on behalf of someone who cannot make decisions for themselves
Autism Act (2009)	Makes provision for the rights and needs of autistic adults (from the age of 18 upwards).

Legislation	Content
Equality Act (2010)	Forms the basis of anti-discrimination law to protect people from certain backgrounds. The Equality Act includes a definition of disability. This definition has been summarised by the government as "You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities."
SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2014)	Code of practice providing statutory guidance relating to children and young people with special educational needs and disabled children and young people.
Care Act 2014	Among other provisions, this act made provision to reform the law relating to care and support for adults and the law relating to support for carers.

Legislation	Content
Children and Families Act (2014)	Makes provision about children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities.
Adult Autism Strategy: supporting its use (2015)	Statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to implement the Adult Autism strategy from 2010 (and updated in 2014).
Draft Mental Health Bill (2022)	Proposed changes to the Mental Health Act (1983).
Health and Care Act (2022)	Includes reforms to enhance collaboration between health and care services.

Key strategies, plans and national guidance relevant to neurodivergent children, young people and adults in England

Key Documents	Content	Key Documents	Content
National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults: 2021-2026	Aims to tackle health and care inequalities and improve access to education and transition into adulthood for autistic children and young people.	Right support, Right care, Right culture (2022)	This guidance applies to any service providing or intending to provide regulated care to people with autism or people with a learning disability
National Disability Strategy (2021) accompanied by the Disability Action Plan (2024)	Outlines plans to improve disabled people's life in the UK.	Build the Right Support (2015)	The national plan to develop community support and close inpatient facilities for people with a learning disability or autism
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP)	Explores issues within the SEND system and proposes changes	Autism NICE Clinical Guidelines	NICE has published three clinical guidelines that, together, describe how health and social care services should be delivered to identify, assess for and care for people diagnosed as autistic. Clinical guideline 128: Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis (2) Clinical guideline 170: Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: support and management (38) Clinical guideline 142: Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management (39) Quality standard 51: Autism (40)
Guiding Principles for Integrated Care System – Learning Disabilities and Autism (2023)	To help improve the lives and outcomes of people with a learning disability and autistic people, the Local Government Association (LGA), Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) as Partners in Care and Health, in partnership with NHS England, have developed a set of guiding principles for integrated care systems and their local partners.	ADHD NICE Guideline [NC87]	This guideline covers recognising, diagnosis and managing ADHD in children, young people and adults. It aims to improve recognition and diagnosis, as well as the quality of care and support for people with ADHD.

Relevant Local Strategies

Key Documents	Content	Key Documents	Content
The State of Health in the City: Liverpool 2040 Report	<p>The report describes how health in the city has evolved since 1984, the current state of health in 2024, and for the first time a projection of health and wellbeing in the city in 2040 based on current trends. Supported by an action plan.</p>	One Liverpool Strategy, 2019-2024	<p>The strategy vision is for a healthier, happier and fairer city, which calls for a positive step change in the health of Liverpool people. The primary ambition is to reduce health inequalities.</p>
Liverpool City Plan	<p>The plan sets out a collective vision about improving the lives of the city's people and its businesses by promoting sustainable, inclusive growth, and by tackling all forms of inequality, whether it be due to socio economic status, age, disability, gender identity, race or ethnicity, sex, religion or belief, and/or sexual orientation.</p>	Cheshire and Merseyside Health & Care Partnership (Interim) Strategy 2023-2028.	<p>This strategy sets out how we will work together to address the key health challenges facing people across Cheshire and Merseyside.</p>
Liverpool Council Plan, 2023-2027.	<p>The Council Plan vision is to make Liverpool fairer, cleaner and stronger for all. It addresses the long-term issues facing our city and sets out how we can improve outcomes for our residents. Six strategic pillars support the vision:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A strong and fair economy for all 2. High quality and inclusive education, skills and employment 3. Thriving communities 4. Healthier lives for children and adults 5. A well-connected, sustainable and accessible city 6. A well-run council 	All Together Fairer: Health Equity and the social determinants of health in Cheshire and Merseyside.	<p>In 2021, the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) was commissioned by Merseyside Health and Care Partnership (HCP) to support work to reduce health inequalities through taking action on the social determinants of health. The HCP and each of Cheshire and Merseyside's nine boroughs have been central to the creation of this report. Work builds on existing efforts to address health inequalities in the region and aims to develop new momentum and ensure that the most effective approaches are developed, with health inequalities prioritised by the HCP, local authorities, and place-based partnership</p>
		Liverpool Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2023-2026.	<p>The strategy aims to ensure that children and young people with SEND and their families have access to high-quality early help and social care support is crucial to enable them to lead fulfilling lives and reach their full potential</p>

Key Documents	Content	Key Documents	Content
Liverpool's Family Help Partnership Strategy 2024-2027	<p>This document outlines how we plan to collectively work together to deliver an effective Early Help System - the network of supportive processes and interactions that make a real difference to the lives of children, young people, and their families at the earliest opportunity. It outlines the shared values, principles and models that underpin local ways of working with children, young people, and families across the continuum of need.</p>	Liverpool Housing Strategy 2025-2030	<p>This strategy outlines our ambitions for improving the city's housing offer and addressing the housing emergencies that are emerging within Liverpool and nationwide. It is a five-year strategy but one which also takes a longer view, seeking to support the housing needs of current and future residents, to progress towards net zero, support the competitiveness and attractiveness of Liverpool and to create the conditions to unlock future opportunities across the economy, health, education, and transport.</p>
Liverpool Carers Strategy, 2019-2024 (Refresh planned for 2025)	<p>The strategy has been developed in partnership with carers and range of partners, to support the health and wellbeing of all carers in Liverpool; reducing the negative impact of caring and enabling carers to lead fulfilled, independent lives alongside their caring role.</p>	Liverpool Hate Crime Strategy, 2020-2033	<p>This Strategy sets out Liverpool's response to hate crime – a collective vision for the city based on consultation with service users, partner organisations and informed by research. The aim of this strategy is to provide a framework for agencies and partners to work together challenging hate crime, also to identify any gaps in services and areas for development.</p>
Liverpool Domestic Abuse Strategy, 2024-2027	<p>Liverpool's Domestic Abuse Strategy aims to tackle domestic abuse and challenge those who perpetrate it, holding them to account for their actions, and the impact on those around them. The strategy has four ambitions, supported by an action plan</p>	Liverpool's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025	<p>The strategy aims to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. It responds to rising challenges like asylum decisions and early prison releases, and highlights the need for better access to housing services, improved data systems, and stronger health support for rough sleepers. The strategy prioritizes prevention, face-to-face support, and partnerships to improve outcomes across housing, health, and wellbeing.</p>
The Liverpool Education Improvement Plan	<p>Our vision for education in Liverpool, once achieved, will see young people supported in their mental health needs. Children will be leaving primary school with fluent reading and writing skills. Our young people will be enjoying inclusive and safe environments. They will be benefiting from the expertise of excellent teachers. And at the point at which they may choose to leave school, they will have a good understanding of the post-16 options available to them.</p>		

Appendix 2.

Definitions of Key Terms

Term	Description
ACEs	ACEs stands for Adverse Childhood Experiences. These are stressful traumatic events that happen during childhood (before the age of 18) and can have long-term effects on a person's health, behaviour and wellbeing. Common ACEs include abuse, neglect and household issues (e.g. violence, substance misuse, mental illness, divorce or having a family member in jail).
ADHD	ADHD stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. ADHD is a condition that affects people's behaviour and brain activity. It affects how a person focuses, controls impulses and manages energy levels. People with ADHD might have trouble concentrating, staying still, act without thinking, be easily distracted.
All Age	People of all ages, children, young people, adult, and older adults.
AUDHD	AUDHD stands for Autism and ADHD. It refers to people who have both Autism and ADHD.

Term	Description
Autism	Autism affects how people communicate and interact. Autism is recognised as a spectrum condition, whilst autistic people share similar characteristics, it affects everyone differently and autistic people may need varying levels of support. In the context of this document, the terms 'autism' and 'autistic' refer to Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC). The preferred term is 'autistic people' rather than 'people with autism'.
Children in Need	Children in Need are children who require support from social services. Other terms often used to describe children in need include 'Children in Care' and 'Looked after Children' by the local authority.
Co-occurring	Existing at the same time.
Dyscalculia	Individuals with dyscalculia have a severe and persistent difficulty with understanding numbers which affects their daily life and education.
Dysgraphia	Dysgraphia is a condition in which someone has difficulty turning their thoughts into written language for their age and ability to think, despite exposure to adequate instruction and education.

Term	Description
Dyslexia	Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
Dyspraxia	Dyspraxia also referred to as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is a condition affecting physical co-ordination, such as tasks requiring balance, playing sports or learning to drive a car. Dyspraxia can also affect your fine motor skills, such as writing or using small objects.
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plan (EHCP) is an assessment of the education, health care and social care needs of a child or young person by the local authority.
GP	General Practitioner (GP) is a doctor based in the community.
ICB	Integrated Care Board boards (ICBs) are NHS organisations responsible for planning health services for their local population
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is important identifying the health and social care needs of a community, to help local authorities and health service to allocate resources effectively
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector that works with and supports local communities.

Term	Description
LeDeR	LeDeR (Learning from Lives and Deaths) is a service improvement programme where the death of every adult with a learning disability and autistic people is reviewed, to understand what happened, to improve care.
Learning Difficulty	A learning difficulty refers to a condition that makes learning more challenging than usual but does not necessarily affect overall intellectual ability. E.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia.
Learning Disability	Department of Health and Social Care (DHSE) have described a learning disability a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills, with a reduced ability to cope independently which started before adulthood. A learning disability is different for everyone. The degree of disability can vary greatly. In all cases, a learning disability is a lifelong condition, for e.g., Down Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome.
Lived Experience	Lived experience refers to the personal knowledge gained through direct first-hand personal experience in a particular situation.
Liverpool Learning Disability Strategic Partnership	Liverpool Learning Disability Strategic Partnership brings together representation from the local authority, NHS, community, voluntary and social enterprise sector, people with learning disabilities, their families and carers to plan and improve services for people with learning disabilities and autism.

Term	Description
Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership	Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership (LNSP) brings together representation from the local authority, NHS, community, voluntary and social enterprise sector, neurodivergent people, their families and carers to plan and improve services for neurodivergent people and their families.
Mental Health Support for Children and Young People in Liverpool	Formerly known as CAHMS. The service provides mental health support for Children and Young People offering emotional and mental health support services.
Neurodiverse	Neurodiversity means that everyone's brain works in different ways. Some people think, learn, and process information differently, and that's a natural part of being human. It is a term that describes all neurotypes, neurotypical and neurodivergent people.
Neurodivergence	The state or condition of having a brain that functions differently from what is considered neurotypical. Neurodivergence includes conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), tic condition (including Tourette syndrome).
Neurodivergent	Neurodivergent refers to individuals or people who have neurodivergent traits or conditions.
Neurotypical	Neurotypical is a term for a person who does not have any neurodivergent conditions and their brain functions in a way considered 'typical' by societal standards.
NHS	National Health Service (NHS), publicly funded health care system in the UK.

Term	Description
NICE	National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides advice and guidance to the NHS in order to ensure it provides the best care and value for money.
Preparing for Adulthood	Preparing for Adulthood is used to describe the process of moving from childhood into adult life. It is used by professionals to describe the changes in services when a child becomes an adult. However, this transition can happen at different times for different families. Planning for transition starts in Year 9 at school, when a young person is 13 to 14 years old.
Reasonable Adjustments	Refers to the legal obligations of employers and services providers to make sure those with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions are not substantially disadvantaged during their education, when accessing health and care services, or doing their jobs.
Self-identification	A person who relates to and sees in themselves traits that are associated with a Neurodivergent existence and identity; and assigns this identity to themselves as a way of understanding and navigating their lived experience.
SEN	SEN stands for Special Educational Needs.

Term	Description
SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)	<p>SEND can affect a child or young person's ability to learn. They can affect their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • behaviour or ability to socialise, for example they struggle to make friends • reading and writing, for example because they have dyslexia • ability to understand things • concentration levels, for example because they have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) • physical ability
SEND Graduated Approach Handbook	<p>This document provides practical guidance and information for schools, educational establishments and other professionals who work and support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).</p>
SEND Local Offer	<p>Liverpool's local offer provides information for children and young people up to the age of 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) their parents or carers – all in one place.</p>
SEND Partnership Board	<p>Liverpool SEND Partnership Board brings together representation from the local authority, NHS, schools, community, voluntary and social enterprise sector, parent /carer forum to oversee and the delivery of the SEND strategy.</p>
Strategy	<p>A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.</p>

Term	Description
Tourette's Syndrome	<p>Tourette's syndrome is a neurological condition that causes you to make involuntary movements and sounds called tics. Tics are fast, repetitive muscle movements that cause sudden body jerks or sounds.</p>
Transforming Care Programme	<p>The Transforming Care programme aims to improve the lives of children, young people and adults with a learning disability and/or a diagnosis of autism who display behaviours that challenge, including those with a mental health condition.</p>
Transition	<p>When a young person reaches 18, they start to receive health care from adult health and social care services instead of children's service. However, education provision changes into adults at the age of 25. This change of services is called transition. Therefore, transitions require organisations to connect with other services and work together to provide a seamless transfer process</p>
Under Reached	<p>Under reached refers to groups of people or communities that have limited or insufficient access to essential resources or services or opportunities compared to the general population.</p>
Variable Attention Stimulus Trait (VAST)	<p>It's an alternative way to describe individuals with attentional differences traditionally labelled as ADHD. The term highlights their unique cognitive abilities rather than focusing on deficits or dysfunction</p>
We	<p>'We' refers to the individuals and organisations that are part of Liverpool Neurodiversity Strategic Partnership and SEND Partnership Board who has supported the development of the strategy and will oversee its delivery.</p>

Appendix 3.

Neurodivergent Support Services

National Sources of Information

Neurodivergent Condition	Overview
ADHD	
ADHD UK	<p>It was founded with a mission to help those affected by ADHD – either those that have the condition or people close to them: family, friends, employers, and co-workers. The aim is to help people navigate their life with ADHD and to reduce the stigma that some attach to those with ADHD.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
ADDiss	ADHD information service
AUTISM	
Autism Initiatives	<p>Autism Initiatives provides a range of person-centred autism specific services. The charity provides services for autistic children and adults including education, residential, short breaks, supported living, outreach, community resource centres, 'day' services, and social enterprises for employment training and experience.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
The National Autistic Society (NAS)	<p>The NAS can be accessed by young people, families and schools. They also offer access to training.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>

Neurodivergent Condition	Overview
DYSCALCULIA	
Dyscalculia	<p>Dyscalculia network brings people together to create a network for those who want to understand more about dyscalculia, want to support people with dyscalculia, and want to make life easier for people with dyscalculia.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
DYSLEXIA	
British Dyslexia Association	<p>The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) has been the voice of dyslexic people since 1972. We are a membership organisation working to achieve a dyslexia-friendly society for all.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
DYSPRAXIA	
Dyspraxia	<p>Information on Dyspraxia can be found on the British Dyslexia Association website.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>

Neurodivergent Condition	Overview
NEURODIVERSITY	
Neurodiversity Hub	<p>The aim of the Neurodiversity Hub is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support this untapped talent to shine, through focused training programs, academic accommodations, assistive technologies and flexible study arrangements. • Link neurodivergent students with work experience, internships and employment opportunities. • Improve the employability of neurodivergent university and TAFE students, establishing a pipeline of potential candidates for employers and boosting workforce participation rates. • Continue establishing the Neurodiversity Hub through a number of universities in Australia, USA, England and Ireland. <p>Click here for more information</p>
The Brain Charity	<p>The Brain Charity champions neurodiversity and provides practical help, emotional support and social activities for every single one.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
Daisy Inclusive UK	<p>Daisy Inclusive UK is a disability-led charity based in Liverpool. We help disabled/vulnerable people and their families to reach their full potential. Our Self Motivation, Inclusive Learning & Empowerment initiative (SMILE) helps make a real and measurable impact on their day-to-day lives through sport, education, guidance and employment.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>

Neurodivergent Condition	Overview
TOURETTE SYNDROME	
Tourettes Action	<p>Tourettes Action is the UK's only national charity dedicated to supporting individuals with Tourette syndrome and their families.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>

Local Support Services

Service	Brief Description	Service	Brief Description
Alder Hey	<p>ADHD Assessment Service (Childrens)</p> <p>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Childrens service</p> <p>Alder Hey Learning Disability and Autism Acute Liaison Team</p> <p>Child Adolescent Mental Health Service: CAMHS</p> <p>Community SaLT Service</p> <p>Developmental Paediatrics (Community Paediatrics)</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>	Liverpool Adult Ladders of Life (LOL) (Adults 18+)	<p>LOL offer a psychosocial model of support including individual and group work for adults living with ADHD/ASD associated conditions. Diagnosis is not required to access this service and can be accessed through self referral.</p> <p>Contact number: 07826 004436</p> <p>Click here for Facebook</p>
ADDvanced Solutions Community Network (5-19 years)	<p>Advanced Solutions offer learning programs and workshops pre/ during and post diagnostic. They offer free programs and learning opportunities that support families of neurodivergent CYP who may also have specific LD or associated MH needs. They also offer weekly informal learning. They have community network groups and an information and advice line. They also provide coaching for YP and CYP groups. They are an open access service; no referral is required and a diagnosis also not required.</p> <p>Contact number: 0151 486 1788</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>	Adult ADHD Assessments and Treatment Service. Cheshire, Wirral Partnership Trust (adults 18+)	<p>Assessment, diagnosis and treatment for adults aged 18+ years.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
LivPac	<p>Offer coffee sessions, and provide resources to support parents. Work with education/health and care services to ensure voice of CYP, families and carers in Liverpool are heard and supported.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>	Liverpool ASD Training Team (0-19years)	<p>No diagnosis is required to access Liverpool ASD Training Team. They provide email support and one to one zoom/telephone consultations for parents.</p>
		Liverpool Autism Spectrum Condition Service	<p>Liverpool Autism Spectrum Condition Service (Adults 18+ /carers)</p> <p>ASC.Team@merseycare.nhs.uk or ReferralsLiverpoolASCTeam@merseycare.nhs.uk</p>
		The Neurodiverse Family Support Network	<p>Offering a range of fun yet therapeutic age appropriate activities for young people</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>
		Mini Smile (5-16)	<p>Welcome to our Mini Smile Club, a heart-warming haven tailored for children aged 5-16 years old with disabilities.</p> <p>Click here for more information</p>

Additional Useful Links:

Service	Information Links
Live Well Directory	A directory of wellbeing and health services, advice and guidance, events, activities and groups. Connecting you to groups and organisations that are able to help. Click here for more information
Liverpool Childrens Centres (Under 5)	All information can be accessed through Liverpool local offer: filter local children's centre by postcode through link above. Click here for more information
Liverpool Local Offer	SEND Local Offer Click here for more information
Liverpool Healthwatch	The independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Liverpool. We're here to make sure that those running services, put people at the heart of care. One of our main purposes is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf. Click here for more information
School Health Team	Click here for more information
SENISS	SENISS stands for Special Educational Needs Inclusion Support Service. They are a team of Specialist Teachers who deliver advice, support, assessment and training for schools/settings around special educational needs and support schools with their inclusive practices. The team support children and young people from 0-25 across Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Post-16. - Liverpool Family Information and SEND Directory Click here for more information
SENDIASS	Special Education Needs and Disabilities Independent Advisor Service Click here for more information

Appendix 4.

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