



**Notes of the Autism Norfolk Forum (ANF) Meeting  
Held on: 11 January 2022**

**Venue: Online via Zoom**

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

<b>Name of Attendee</b>	<b>Organisation and/or Role</b>
Lee Gibbons	ASD Helping hands, Lead
Autism Administrator	Note taker
Tom Bassett	Partnership Manager
Trevor Key	NAPB Co-Chair
Adrian Grant	NAPB member
Ellen Vanlint	Active Norfolk, presenter
Sarah Harrison	Active Norfolk, presenter
<b>Members of the public (19)</b>	

<b>Agenda Item 1</b>	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>
1.1	<p>Welcome and introductions made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This Forum was originally planned to be a hybrid in-person and Zoom based meeting, but safety considerations due to the Covid-19 pandemic forced it to be online only.</li> <li>• Communication prompts and their use explained.</li> <li>• Acknowledged a note taker is provided.</li> <li>• NAPB Code of Conduct introduced and explained.</li> </ul>
	<p>Apologies given from NHS staff originally scheduled to speak today. Their organisations had directed them to help with Covid-19 response as a priority.</p>

<b>Agenda Item 2</b>	<b>Update from the Board</b>
2.1	<p>The Norfolk Autism Partnership (NAPB) was set up 2016 in response to the National Autism Strategy. It aims to make Norfolk a more friendly and accepting place for people with autism. There are currently 5 different working groups that feed into the board: Engagement, Diagnostics,</p>

	<p>Workforce Development, Document Update, and Employment. These working groups report directly to the NAPB. The NAPB reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board.</p> <p>The Partnership Board is Independent of Norfolk County Council (NCC) and any other statutory bodies. It has an independent website, which is managed through the Engagement Working Group.</p>
2.2	<p>Lee Gibbons gave a brief overview of the recent activities of the Board and Working Groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Diagnostics Working Group has led on updating autism diagnosis information on multiple websites. Member have worked on national and local work on developing a Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) profile, as well as on waiting rooms and waiting lists. The group has appointed an autistic representative to act as chair.</li> <li>• The Engagement Working Group works to prepare and run Autism Norfolk Forums. The group writes the Partnership newsletter and manages the independent website, which hosts autism training as well as other useful information. It is currently working to develop informal groups for autistic people to meet up and socialise. Discussion about these groups with Forum participants followed.</li> <li>• The new Employment working Group is still in early stages. After discussions with people with lived experience, it is focussing on finding a large employer to work with as an Autism Employment Champion and compiling knowledge of existing resources.</li> <li>• Autism training developed by the Partnership continues to be refined and is approved by the University of East Anglia. The eLearning component of the training is available on the Partnership website.</li> </ul>

<b>Agenda Item 3</b>	<b>Mental Health: Presentation by Active Norfolk,</b>
3.1	<p>Presentation on the work of Active Norfolk, given by Ellen Vanlint and with additional support given by Sarah Harrison. Active Norfolk is a Norfolk based non-profit organisation that aims to improve health and fitness in the county. The organisation covers the whole of Norfolk with several active projects. Generally, Active Norfolk works up to 10 weeks at any one site and can work with individuals to lead sessions. Activities are open to everyone who wants to join. They usually work with people aged 25 and under, but the organisers are keen to keep “older young people” around to support younger members.</p> <p>Anyone can self-refer to the Active Norfolk service, not just those with an EHCP.</p>

	Active Norfolk would like to work more with the Partnership on future projects. Tom Bassett has already had some discussions with Active Norfolk representatives to link to other Partnership initiatives, such as Library Champions or social groups discussed above as part of the Engagement Working Group's activities.
3.2	<p>Current Active Norfolk projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disability Real Action Group Of Norfolk (DRAGONS) Inclusive Activity Review of Sports Clubs and Leisure Providers.</b> DRAGONS are a group of young people with a range of disabilities. The group was initially set up in 2011 to review short breaks. It is involved in recruitment, commissioning of services, accessibility and ongoing work of Active Norfolk and other partners. As well as improving their own lives and having fun, the DRAGONS provide a useful service influencing decision-makers and helping community sport and leisure clubs.</li> <li>• <b>Covid Impact Questionnaire.</b> Active Norfolk held one set of sessions before the Covid-19 outbreak. The questionnaire is to find out, among other things, how people are feeling about Covid, what helped throughout lockdowns and whether physical activities continued after sessions. Survey results will influence Active Norfolk's future work.</li> <li>• <b>On The Move Outdoors.</b> As Active Norfolk was unable to access many indoor facilities during the pandemic, activities were moved outdoors. Parks, green spaces, planned walks, and other outdoor areas are being reviewed for their terrain, the presence of accessible toilets and other important concerns. Currently, the project involves developing lanyards with useful information.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>For more information, or to suggest a local green space or walk for review, attendees advised to get in touch via <a href="mailto:ellen.vanlint@activenorfolk.org">ellen.vanlint@activenorfolk.org</a></p> <p>The <b>Every Move website</b> has just been launched and lists activities run by Active Norfolk. <a href="https://www.everymove.uk/">https://www.everymove.uk/</a></p>

<b>Agenda Item 4</b>	<b>Mental Health: Feedback from the Public</b>
4.1	<p>In place of a presentation by NHS staff, attendees split up into small groups to discuss the issues currently facing them before returning to the main meeting. Notes from the individual groups were compiled, summary points as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid is having a negative impact on SEND Families and schools.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive feedback for Tina Allen and Autism Service Norfolk</li> <li>• Waiting times to access services are generally very long. Private services have much lower waiting times, so many families feel forced to use them.</li> <li>• Attendees reported difficulties receiving a dual diagnosis of autism and another condition, with specific example given of ADHD and autism diagnosis. These comments were forwarded to Tracey Walton (Autism Commissioning Manager, NCC) and Clare Angell (NHS Norfolk &amp; Waveney) with permission.</li> <li>• Transitioning between different service areas is very poor. A specific example given of moving from Norfolk to another area and support not following.</li> <li>• The wellbeing service not working well for people with autism. The maximum number of 6 sessions is sometimes not enough. Sessions need to be tailored better to the needs of autistic people, and staff involved in the service would benefit from autism training. Documentation sent out by the Wellbeing Service is often not accessible and extremely complicated, or else in an Easy Read format which is unsuitable for a wider audience.</li> <li>• Nursery staff should be trained to recognise autism / given autism training.</li> <li>• In general, more appropriate training for staff in a wide variety of environments and more concern given to reasonable adjustments. Specific points such as asking “how can I help” and “What can I do” were said to be helpful, and recognition that small changes can have big impacts.</li> <li>• Informal social opportunities, rather than more formal groups, were emphasised as being important. It was noted that talking to someone with autism as peer support about topics which were not autism-related was particularly valuable. This comment accompanied a general recognition that group environments may not work for everybody.</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments should be prioritised throughout mental health support sessions.</li> </ul>
4.2	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Tom Bassett to follow up and check who commissions Wellbeing Service, to check if improving document accessibility and uptake of autism training can be encouraged.</p>

	Actions from the Meeting	Action Holder and Due Date
<b>Action 1</b>	Employment issues will be prioritised on future Board and Forum agenda.	Tom Bassett
<b>Action 2</b>	Tom Bassett to follow up and check who commissions Wellbeing Service, to check if improving document accessibility and uptake of autism training can be encouraged.	Tom Bassett

<b>Date, time and location of next meeting</b>
Future Autism Forums are still being arranged. It is hoped the next meeting will be in April 2022. More details will be released in time.

## **Glossary**

ANF:	Autism Norfolk Forum
ASD:	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASB:	Autism Service Norfolk
CCG:	Clinical Commissioning Groups
EHCP:	Education, Health and Care Plan
FOIA:	Freedom of Information Act
GDPR:	General Data Protection Regulations
NAP:	Norfolk Autism Partnership
NAPB:	Norfolk Autism Partnership Board
NAS:	National Autistic Society
NCC:	Norfolk County Council
NCH&C:	Norfolk Community Health and Care
N&SFT:	Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust
SEND:	Special Educational Need and Disabilities
UEA:	University of East Anglia
WAW:	World Autism Week
WG:	Working Group
WG Lead:	Working Group Lead

**Suggestion for next ANF meeting theme: Employment**

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