

REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION OF:	Cabinet
DATE:	18th October 2017
SUBJECT:	Bury to become an Autism friendly Borough
REPORT FROM:	Leader of the Council
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jacqui Waite, Strategic Planning and Development Officer Department for Communities & Wellbeing
TYPE OF DECISION:	CABINET KEY DECISION
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	The information in this report is in the public domain
SUMMARY:	Public spaces can prove extremely difficult for people with autism and this is magnified by a lack of understanding of the needs of people with autism. By becoming an autism friendly borough, Bury will offer the same opportunities to people with autism to work, shop and enjoy community life as the rest of the residents, workers and visitors to Bury.
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	Agreement to work towards Bury becoming an Autism Friendly Borough
IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	This strategy is supported, and any activity will be funded within existing budget levels.

	External funding will be sought where possible.
Health and Safety Implications	Set out any impact in terms of Health, Safety and Welfare.
Statement by Executive Director of Resources (including Health and Safety Implications)	Autism friendly considerations will be taken into account when developing any of the Council's own assets.
Equality/Diversity implications:	Yes
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes When undertaking its functions, policy and decision making, the Council must have regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, which includes consideration of the public sector equality duty. It must be able to demonstrate that its actions are proportionate and undertaken to achieve a legitimate aim, in order to ensure it is not open to challenge. The recommendation supports compliance with the Council's duties under the legislation.
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet/Committee	Council	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction:

Following the announcement by the Mayor of Greater Manchester that he will strive to ensure that Greater Manchester becomes an Autism Friendly Region, many towns, businesses and organisations are now seeking to ensure they meet this pledge. It has been highlighted because more than 1 in 100 people in the UK are autistic, many of them and their families still struggle to access essential community spaces, businesses and shops.

The aim of this initiative is to initially become an autism friendly borough with a view to extending the scheme to become a Hidden Disability Friendly Borough.

Public spaces can prove extremely difficult for people with autism and other hidden disabilities such as ADHD and Dementia. They can be overwhelming, crowded, unpredictable, loud and bright. When people feel overloaded by too much information, they encounter a public that simply doesn't understand them and their autism.

With the introduction of a simple framework and training package for public spaces Bury will become an attractive and enjoyable place for people with autism or other hidden disabilities to work, shop, live and enjoy in line with everyone else.

1.2 What does "Hidden Disability" Mean?

Hidden disabilities can hinder a person's efforts to go to school, work, socialise, and more. Although the disability creates a challenge for the person who has it, the reality of the disability can be difficult for others to recognize or acknowledge. Others may not understand the cause of the problem, if they cannot see evidence of it in a visible way. Hidden disabilities are chronic illnesses and conditions that significantly impair normal activities of daily living. In the United States, 96% of people with chronic medical conditions show no outward signs of their illness, and 10% experience symptoms that are considered disabling.

What Are Some Common Hidden Disabilities?

- Mental health issues such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.
- Dementia
- Autism
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Epilepsy
- HIV/AIDS
- Diabetes
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Attention Deficit-Disorder (ADHD)
- Learning Disabilities (LD)

What do Hidden Disabilities have in common?

- People are unable to "see" the disability.
- There are no "visible" supports to indicate a disability such as wheelchairs
- It is a permanent disability
- The disability may be managed through medication or behaviour such as in the case of diabetes, asthma, epilepsy or psychiatric disorders.
- The person is in some kind of physical or emotional pain/stress.
- The person may exhibit "unusual" or challenging behaviour or language

Challenges for a person with a hidden disability:

- They may not know they have a disability or regard themselves as such.

- They may find everyday situations stressful due to sensory issues
- They may not have been diagnosed.
- They may not know what they need.
- They may know what they need, but are unable to articulate it.
- They may often feel misunderstood or may feel ignored or feel invalidated.
- They may suspect something is wrong, but not know what it is or how to fix it.
- They may find it difficult to understand others feelings or words
- They may find it difficult to express their feelings or needs

1.3 Current situation in Bury

Bury is well positioned to become an Autism Friendly Borough. It has one of the best resources for people affected by autism in the North West in the charity organisation "Buddy's 4 Children with Autism" as well as a long established Autism Development Group and User/Carer Group and a dedicated lead officer in the Council.

Work has already started on different aspects of this concept as consultation has been undertaken around Dementia Friendly Communities. There is also an on-going project entitled "Bury Safe Place Scheme" whereby businesses sign up to offer a place of safety and support for vulnerable people who feel lost, frightened or in need of help when they are out and about in Bury. Similarly, Buddys 4 Children With Autism, a charity in Bury, have set up a scheme called Friendly Aware Bury (FAB) which also aims to sign up businesses in Bury to offer a place of safety and support for vulnerable people with a hidden disability.

The aim is to set up an autism friendly scheme in line with the pledge made by The Mayor of Greater Manchester and then to pull all these schemes together into one scheme across Bury to ensure that Bury is accessible to all people with autism and ultimately all hidden disabilities.

2. How will the scheme work

In simple terms, Bury businesses and public spaces will be offered training and resources to enable them to be classed as an autism friendly establishment. They will then display posters and window advertisements so people with autism are aware of this status.

The scheme will be advertised to the general public and anyone with autism can get a card to show to the staff in the organisation to highlight they may need some support or a place of safety.

2.1 What does Autism Friendly look like?

To become autism Friendly it is crucial for public spaces to view themselves from a person's perspective . Through an understanding of autism and other hidden disabilities, people can and should be able to enjoy the facilities and experience offered just as any other person can.

This doesn't mean investing in wholesale, expensive physical alterations, it is the small inexpensive changes that make a massive difference to autistic people. Most people have the ability to organise, sequence and prioritise to plan daily activities and manage time effectively. Some people however may find organising, sequencing and prioritising difficult. In addition, an autistic person thrives on being in a familiar

environment with routine and structure. For these reasons, a visit to a local shop, business or amenity can throw up many challenges. These can be minimised through simple considerations to allow autistic visitors to effectively prepare and plan any potential visit in advance.

A framework will be put together as well as a training package to ensure organisations are meeting the criteria to be classed as "Autism Friendly". The framework will include:

Customer information –

- Accurate and helpful guidance and information relevant to the needs of people with autism should allow an individual to plan their visit in detail.
- A named person provided as key contact who has a good understanding of autism and other hidden disabilities and the needs of potential visitors, who can be contacted in advance to help in the planning process for a visit
- Details of building layout in particular areas that might present challenges for people

Staff and volunteer understanding

- Staff training to ensure they have an understanding of hidden disabilities and knowing how it might affect someone can help staff to find ways to help and deal with challenging situations, understand particular behaviours and understand how to help and support people who are struggling.

Physical environment

- The physical environment will play an important role to the experience of a person with autism or dementia. People on the autistic spectrum have a variety of difficulties with sensory stimulus such as sound, light, odour and textures. People with dementia may have issues with colours and shapes. Therefore, small, reasonable adjustments can make a massive difference to people such as providing a quiet area, appropriate signage or information on areas which may cause difficulty such as crowded areas, places where queuing is likely etc so people can plan and prepare for the visit in advance.

Customer experience

- An autism friendly working culture should make visitors feel welcome. A clear process for visitors to feedback on customer experience and an established process for evaluating, responding and acting on that feedback will help with making improvements for the future.

Promoting understanding

- Fundamental to creating and maintaining autism friendly spaces is increasing the understanding amongst the wider public. To be autism friendly, organisations should strive to challenge the myths, misconceptions and assumptions that make people feel isolated and make society seem at times so unwelcoming.

2.0 ISSUES

Main issues:

- Seeking organisations willing to sign up to become Autism Friendly. There has been an excellent response to current schemes in place so it is not envisaged to be a major risk.
- Training –training can be provided by current providers of existing schemes. Full costs need to be established for this training and could be funded by businesses receiving the training.
- Costs of other collateral such as posters, stickers and cards – this could be also sought via funding from businesses involved. A full breakdown of costs will be produced once agreement to go ahead has been given.
- Equality and diversity – this project will ensure that people with hidden disabilities, their families, friends and carers are able to access shops, leisure facilities, public places and have a better opportunity to seek employment and other opportunities.

3.0 CONCLUSION

These plans are in the early stages of development. A full framework and breakdown of costs will be put together once agreement for the concept is granted. The framework will be produced in consultation with people with hidden disabilities and their families.

The introduction of this scheme will ensure that Bury is a town that is able to be accessed and enjoyed equally by everyone.

List of Background Papers:-

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