

# Slough Autism Steering Group

## Terms Of Reference

### What is the Autism Steering Group

The new Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029 has been approved by Cabinet in February 2024. The Strategy has been widely informed by the feedback provided by autistic adults, their families and carers, Slough Borough Council, Health partners, Adult Social Care providers, and volunteer organisations. To ensure that the Action Plan and the Strategy ambition to make Slough an Autism-Friendly Town and Community, an Autism Steering Group involving key stakeholders is created to inform and oversee delivery of effective and meaningful actions towards these goals. The Autism Steering Group is made up of people who are committed to working together to make the lives of autistic people, their families, and carers better by challenging inequalities, influencing decision-making processes, and increasing awareness of autistic needs in the wider community.

### Priorities of the Slough Autism Steering Group

The Slough Autism follows the 8 priorities described in the Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029. These are:

- Independent Living.
- Access to the community.
- Integration of Health and Social Care.
- Transitioning and preparing for adulthood.
- Employment, skills development, training.
- Stay Safe and Free from Abuse.
- Preventing Loneliness and Social Isolation.
- Communication and Information Sharing

Detailed information can be found in Section 8 of the Strategy and section 20 (Action Plan).

The Slough Autism Steering Group aligns with the overall Adult Social Care vision and priorities for Slough which include *“embedding Co-production at the heart of care and support, whereby we will continue our work in partnership with residents to develop our services to ensure they meet the needs of the community. We will continue to work with communities to develop skills and knowledge so that residents are better placed to flourish from the wide range of opportunities available in Slough, as well as being better equipped to meet some of their own needs”*.

### Aims of the Slough Autism Steering Group

- To oversee the delivery of the Action Plan included in the Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029.
- To ensure Co-Production becomes the normal and expected way of working together to improve and develop new and existing opportunities for autistic people in Slough.
- To break down barriers to community access and create opportunities for autistic people in Slough to get together.
- To work alongside other partners to address inequalities affecting autistic people (health, education, employment)

- To influence decision-making processes and make recommendations so that autistic people are at the centre of the conversation and supported to participate.
- To create and share information in accessible formats about current offer, future plans, community initiatives, and development of services dedicated to autism.
- To inform people in Slough and raise awareness about autistic needs in the wider community.
- To promote the rights of autistic people, their families, and carers.

## **Members of the Slough Autism Steering Group**

For a successful Autism Steering Group, it is important that all the right stakeholders are members. They are the key people who can bring about change.

These stakeholders include:

- **Autistic People**
- **Their families and carers**
- Co-Production Network
- Slough Borough Council
- Community Team for People with Learning Disability
- Health partners
- Adult Social Care Providers
- Housing Associations
- Voluntary organisations
- Thames Valley Police
- Department of Work and Pensions

Autistic people, their families and carers who wish to co-chair the Board meetings can inform the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner to take part on a rotating basis.

## **Structure of the Autism Steering Group**

- The Board is co-chaired by the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner. The other co-chair will be an autistic person and/or their families and carers on a rotational basis.
- If the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner cannot attend the meeting, a member of the Adult Commissioning Team (People Strategy) at Slough Borough Council will co-chair on their behalf.
- If the autistic co-chair and/or their families and carers cannot attend the meeting, their place is swapped with the next scheduled co-chair on the calendar.

## **Time and Location of Meetings**

Starting from May 2024, the Slough Autism Steering Group meetings will be held quarterly (once every three months), on the second Thursday of the month from 10:00 am to 13:00 pm.

## **Meeting format**

The Slough Autism Steering Group meetings will always be hybrid to ensure it is inclusive (e.g to allow someone with caring responsibilities to fully participate whether the meeting is virtual or

face to face) and maximise representation. The physical location may vary and is announced one month prior to the meeting date.

The agenda for the meeting will be issued to all participants in easy-read format via email at least seven days prior to the meeting date. Participants who need different forms of communication can inform the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner who will produce hard copies of the agenda.

The meetings have the following structure:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Follow-up on actions from previous meeting.
- Summary of most recent news at local, regional, and national level.
- Specific topic(s) for presentation.
- Group discussion on topic(s)
- Feedback from discussions and formulation of actions
- Any other business
- End of meeting

The Slough Autism Steering Group will be following the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy and use plain English, easy-read, and multimedia formats (e.g. videos) as communication tools.

## **Meeting Minutes**

Notes will be taken at all meetings by members of the board on a rotational basis. Easy-read minutes will be sent out to all participants within 15 working days via email and will be published on the Slough Borough Council Website for public access. Participants who cannot access electronic distribution can inform the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner who will produce hard copies of the minutes to be either delivered or picked up at Observatory House.

## **Responsibilities of the Slough Autism Steering Group members**

- All members will be regularly invited to attend all meetings and it is their responsibility to confirm or decline invitations.
- Members must attend at least two out of the four meetings in a calendar year to maintain their status.
- Members who represent a stakeholder group have the responsibility to communicate and share all information concerning the Board to the group they represent in a timely and accurate manner.

## **Minimum requirements to run a Slough Autism Steering Group Meeting**

A minimum of 10 members of the Board is required for the meeting to go ahead. If a key decision must be made, then 15 members are the minimum requirement.

The minimum number of present members must include:

- Chair or deputy chair
- One autistic person and/or
- One family member or carer

## **Requests to the Autism Steering Group**

Written requests can be submitted to the co-chairs for the followings:

- Present a specific topic / activity / service / community initiative to the Autism Steering Group.
- Gain opinion from the Autism Steering Group on specific areas of work.
- Request approval from the Autism Steering Group for developments affecting autistic people in Slough (nothing about us without us).

Request must be in plain English and need to be submitted to the co-chairs at least 10 days before the meeting to be included in the agenda. Response to all requests will be provided by co-chairs within 3 working days.

## **Attending a Slough Autism Steering Group**

Meetings are held in public and a request to attend the meeting can be made to the co-chairs at least 10 days prior to the meeting to accommodate the number of participants within the room comfortably. Attendance may be limited due to room capacity limitations.

## **Work Plan of the Slough Autism Steering Group**

The work plan and subsequent activities of the Autism Steering Group will be strictly linked to the objectives and actions contained in the Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029 and will be updated twice a year or when specific circumstances require to do so (e.g. Law changes, emergencies). The work plan will be available on Slough Borough Council Website and a report will be made yearly for Cabinet on the progresses. This will include regular feedback from autistic people, their families, and carers.

## **Subgroups within the Slough Autism Steering Group**

Specific Subgroups will be created to deliver specific objectives on behalf of the Slough Autism Steering Group. These groups will be task specific and time limited and participation is voluntary. Subgroups will meet with a bi-weekly frequency (once every two weeks) to carry out their objectives and will be coordinated by the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner or the group co-chairs that will facilitate participation and work schedule. All subgroups will report back to the Board regularly for updates, feedback, and guidance on specific objectives, challenges and milestones achieved.

## **Reporting Arrangements of the Slough Autism Steering Group**

The Slough Autism Steering Group will be subject to effective and robust Governance and reporting arrangements as follows:

- One annual progress updates report will be presented to Cabinet to provide feedback on achieving actions within the Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029.
- Quarterly updates to Slough DLT and the ASC Transformation Board will be provided by the Learning Disability and Autism Commissioner.
- Quarterly progress updates will be also provided to the CPN to ensure they are part of the governance arrangements and provides opportunity to have oversight and advice on the work in progress as well as strengthen transparency.

## Supporting people to attend the Slough Autism Steering Group

Autistic People will be supported during the meetings by:

- Making sure meetings run on time and by scheduling.
- Having people to provide support during the meeting and ensure they have a voice.
- Using simple language, no jargon.
- Having extra support after the meetings to discuss specific topics in detail and have influence in shaping actions.

## Behavioural Considerations

Members and attendees will always consider their behaviour by following the below rules:

- Always respect different opinions and ideas and make sure everyone has the chance to speak.
- Always be kind to others and thoughtful in our actions.
- Actively listen and ensure the language used is inclusive avoiding making any assumptions.
- Work as part of a team to deliver changes for carers and learn from the group.
- Strive to ensure engagement, participation, co-design, and co-production in all that we do.
- Use our experience to help find solutions.
- Represent the views and experiences of Autistic people in the community.
- Maintain confidentiality, seek permissions/consent (e.g always ensure data protection).

This approach is in line with *The Nolan Principals of Public Life* which are:

- **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity** - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## **Concerns and Complaints**

Concerns and Complaints regarding the Slough Autism Steering Group can be reported via the official Complaints route provided by Slough Borough Council who will investigate all allegations as per Feedback and Complaints policy.