

## All Age Disability Strategy

# Full and Active Lives

2024 - 2029



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# What this strategy is about

Our vision is that people of all ages with disabilities can maximise their potential and live a full and active life. We already help lots of people in Wirral to do this, but there is still more we need to do.

We believe that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their health or differences. These barriers can be physical, such as buildings not having accessible toilets, but they can also be because of people's attitudes, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things like have a job.

The number of people with disabilities who may need support from social care is growing, we need to think carefully about how we should use the time and resources available to maximise everyone's potential to live their best life.

**Our mission is to work together to realise aspirations, improve access to opportunities and reduce these barriers for people of all ages with disabilities in Wirral.**

This Strategy sets out our commitment to make things better for people with disabilities and

their parents and carers over the next 5 years.

This strategy is for anyone, of any age, who has one or more disability. This may be:

- a learning disability and/or autism
- a physical disability, including people with a brain injury
- a sensory impairment, such as loss of eyesight or hearing
- a mental health condition lasting more than 12 months.

Autistic people may also be interested in our **Autism Strategy 2024-29**.

## Language is important

We know that people use different terms when talking about disability. For example, some people prefer 'disabled people' and others 'people with disabilities', some people will prefer 'learning disability' and other 'learning difficulty'. In this strategy, we will use the term 'people with disabilities'



# Why this strategy is important

**71,000**  
people live in  
Wirral who are  
disabled under the  
Equality Act  
2010<sup>1</sup>.

This means **22.2%** of people in Wirral live with some kind of disability or impairment that limits them in their day-to-day activities.

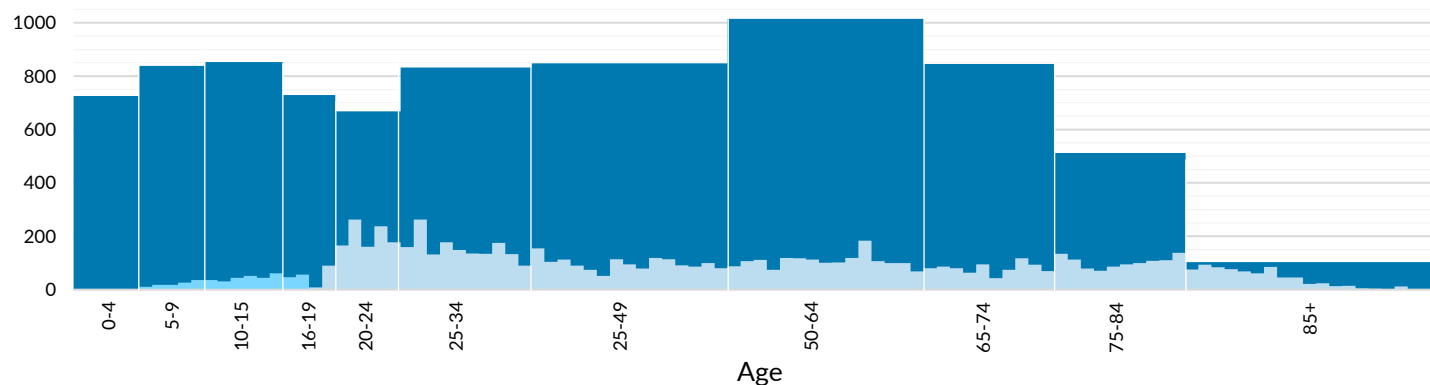
This is compared to **19.4%** of people in the North West and **17.3%** across England<sup>1</sup>.

This graph shows the number of people with disabilities in Wirral by age group and the number of people who receive care and support from Adult Social Care for their disabilities.

We need to ensure everyone receives the care and support they need, whether this be from their families and carers, voluntary, community, faith, or social enterprise organisations, or from social care.

We need to carefully think about the services we offer to ensure we make the best use of our resources (time and money), so people are supported to live full and active lives.

People with Disabilities in Wirral



■ Total people with disabilities source: Census 2021

■ People receiving care and support from Children's Social Care for their disabilities source: Wirral Children's Services 2024.

■ People receiving care and support from Adult Social Care for their disabilities source: Wirral Intelligence Service 2023.



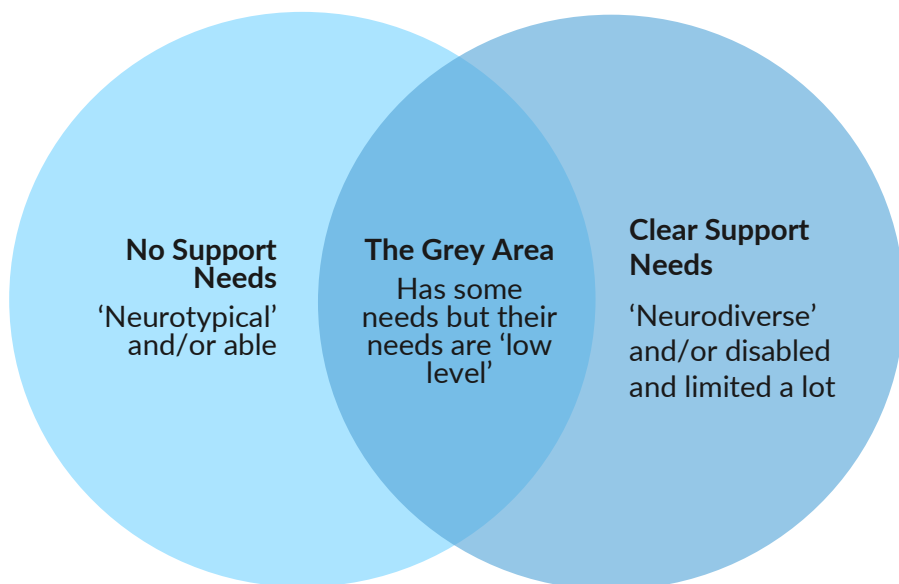


# The 'Grey Area' of Disability

We have spoken to people from across Wirral, and you told us we need to provide better support for the many people who often 'fall through the cracks' of care and support and are in what is called the 'grey area' of a disability. For example, this could be people who do not have a diagnosis, some young people with SEND or people with disabilities who are parents. This strategy is important as it also sets out our commitment to supporting these people.

A person is said to be in The 'Grey Area' of Disability when their level of need changes regularly or their disabilities are not considered severe enough for support, so they fall into the gap.

People with low-level mental health conditions, usually without a diagnosis, are a good example. We need to ensure that these people are supported so their health and wellbeing does not deteriorate.



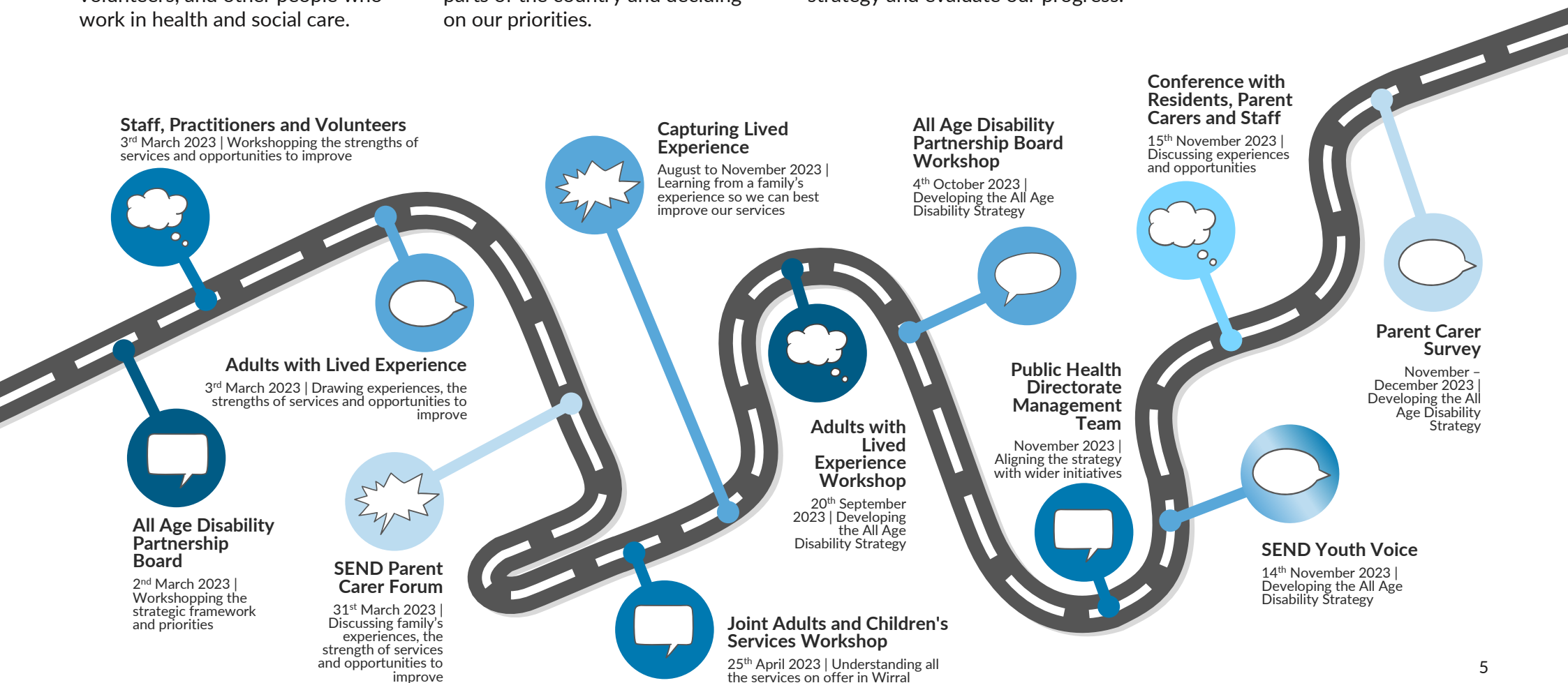
# How this strategy has been developed

This strategy has been coproduced with people from across Wirral, including people with disabilities, their parents and carers, practitioners, commissioners, volunteers, and other people who work in health and social care.

We have worked together at all stages in developing this strategy from thinking about our values and how services should look and feel, to looking at good practice in other parts of the country and deciding on our priorities.

We will continue to work with people who use services, their parents and carers, and the people who work in these services when we make our plan to deliver this strategy and evaluate our progress.

We have received so much feedback, and after working together to prioritise our goals, 193 of your comments have been directly included in this Strategy.





# Our 5 core values



## Person-centred

Placing the person at the heart of everything we do.

Disability is complex and no two people with disabilities have the same experience, even if they have the same condition or impairments.

We need to ensure that people with care and support needs have support that is personalised to them, their needs, and their goals. It is important that people have choice and control over the care and support they receive.



## Working Together

Coproducing and collaborating for the best outcomes.

We cannot provide person-centre care and support without coproducing and collaborating with the people who use services and their parents and carers.

Collaboration between organisations – such as the council, the NHS and volunteer organisations – is also very important to ensure we coordinate our services and share resources, so we don't work in silos and duplicate work.



## Advocacy

Giving everybody the equal opportunity to have their voice heard.

Advocacy is when people get support from another person to help them express their wishes and then stand up for their rights. A person can also be a self-advocate.

We need to ensure all people with disabilities in Wirral have their voices heard, in their preferred communication style.



## Integrity

Doing the right thing for the right reasons.

We need to ensure as an organisation we follow good principles and are trustworthy. As part of this we must ensure our services follow the law and everyone in Wirral has equal access to support.

By making sure we are providing the best services, we also ensure we are making the best use of public money.



## Quality

Being outstanding in everything we do.

When co-producing this strategy, we have looked to see what good work is happening in other parts of the country.

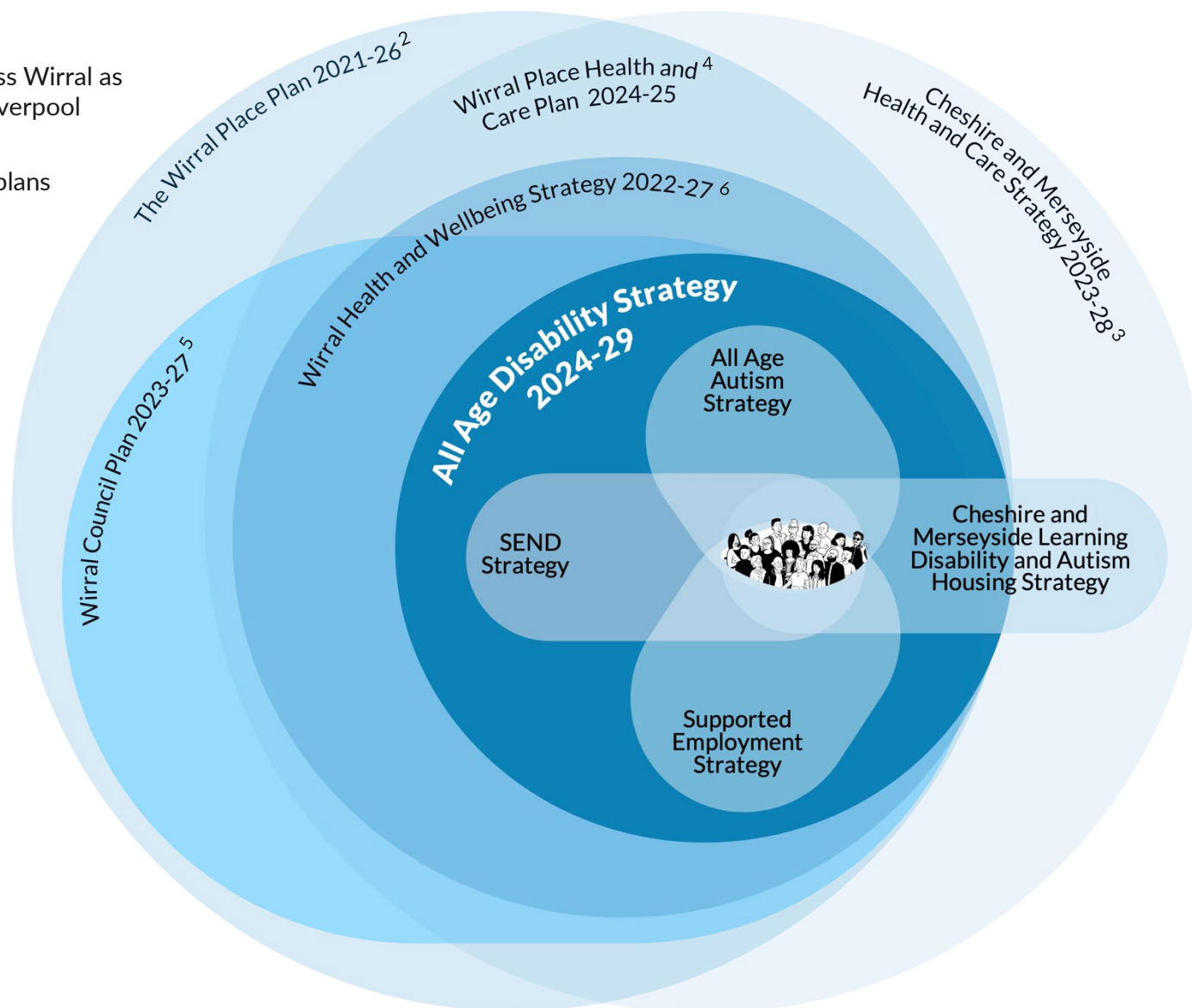
This helps us learn from what works well in other areas so we can be innovative and provide the best quality care and support for people with disabilities in Wirral.

# How this strategy links with other strategies

There are lots of other strategies in place across Wirral as well as across Cheshire and Merseyside and Liverpool City Region.

This diagram shows how these strategies and plans overlap, and where this All-Age Disability Strategy 2024-29 fits in among this.

This is not an exhaustive list; however, it does highlight the areas of focus for the All-Age Disability Strategy, and how its outcomes contributes into other strategies and plans: all centred around Wirral residents.





# Our Priorities over the next 5 years

We aim to deliver services that are 'outcome-focused', which means our services support people to achieve the goals (or the 'outcomes' or 'end-results') that they tell us are important to them.

You told us that there are four outcomes that we should prioritise supporting people to achieve over the next five years. These are:



Improving **Health and Wellbeing**



Living **Enriched Lives**



Having **Independent Lives**



Gaining **Employment and Economic Wellbeing**

All our priorities are interlinked, and we know it's hard to achieve your goals and outcomes in one area if the others are not in place. So, it is important we make progress against all these priorities





# Improving Health and Wellbeing

**Our health and wellbeing are one of the most important parts of our lives. Without having the best possible mental and physical health, it can be hard to live our lives how we choose.**

**Many people with disabilities need some care and support to ensure they have the best possible health, so we need to ensure the right support is available .**



## What you told us

- You need improved access to exercise and promoting healthy eating.
- You need better care and support planning for people and their carers to ensure people get the support they need when they need it. This might be support to talk earlier, support during an unexpected event or emergency, or support after a crisis.
- You need staff across health, education, and social care to be well trained, particularly around disability awareness, reasonable adjustments, and how to best support people with their mental health.
- You also told us you need better and more accessible information on health and wellbeing services, for example easy-read information about scans and screenings or workshops and courses to help people learn about their health and wellbeing.

“

*Provide good quality training to carers and care companies, as too often staff don't have basic cooking skills or the time to support the people they care for to produce healthy nutritious meals”*

– Parent Carer

”

## What else we know

People with disabilities are more likely than people without disabilities to have poorer overall wellbeing<sup>7</sup> and have less access to health care or be more physically inactive<sup>8</sup>. This is especially the case for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Personalised care and supporting planning are important to ensure people receive the support they need to address the things that are not working for them to help improve their health and wellbeing<sup>9</sup>.

The Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27<sup>10</sup> sets out a clear priority to address differences in health outcomes.



## Where we need to focus



We need to strengthen our partnership with the NHS to improve timely access to the right care and support and ensure people have the necessary plans in place for before, during and after a crisis. To do this we will:

- coproduce digital and technology solutions that enable people to be more independent.
- work with health partners to expand the roll out of health passports for people of all ages and disabilities.
- ensure people can find and have access to mental health support when they need it, including annual health checks for people with learning disabilities.



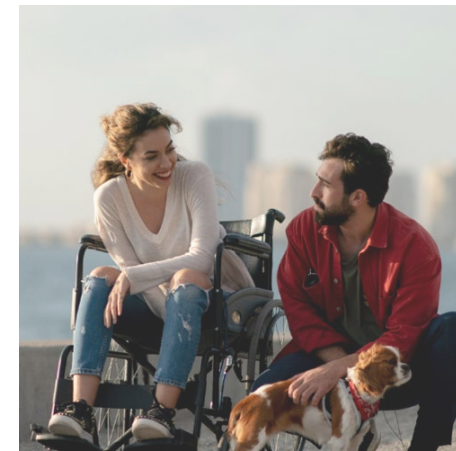
We need to ensure staff across the council and other services have the skills and knowledge to best support people and their parents and carers. To do this we will:

- develop and deliver a training plan for staff across health and social care, for example the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training for staff supporting people with learning disabilities and autistic people.



We need to ensure people have the skills or are supported to eat healthily, and regularly exercise in line with their ability and that opportunities to exercise are accessible to all. To do this we will:

- explore opportunities to collaborate with care providers and organisations like Change4Life to promote healthy eating via good, accessible information and advice.
- work more closely with sport and physical activity providers to improve access to exercise, for example yoga, cycling, basketball, dancing, swimming, or going for a walk.



We need to ensure there is good information available in accessible format across services that support people with their health and wellbeing, such as GPs, hospitals, and dentists. To do this we will:

- work with healthcare partners to develop a plan to ensure accessible information to support people with their health.

# Living Enriched Lives



**It is important that people have control over their choices and the right support in place to live a happy, fulfilled life. To do this, we need to ensure that opportunities for new experiences are centred on the person.**



## What you told us

- You need a variety of fun, fulfilling activities available across Wirral to help people have opportunities to socialise and make friends. Opportunities must be accessible for people to make connections with everyone and make friends outside of the disabled community.
- You need better access to the outdoors, such as the beach or forest trails.
- You need activities in the evening, for example: karaoke and disco nights or opportunities to attend live music for young adults and adults, or film and party evenings for children to build their social skills.
- You want healthy and safe relationships with everyone in your life, from friends and colleagues to romantic partners and family, and help to balance the support you need with making and maintaining your relationships.

Having good information available to you plays a big part in accessing activities and services that can enrich lives, and you told us you are often not aware of what is available in Wirral.

## What else we know

We know that spending time outdoors improves health and wellbeing, and studies have shown that people who regularly spend time in nature have consistently better physical, mental, and social wellbeing<sup>6</sup>.

Nationally, over 92% of adults agree that spending time outdoors was good for their mental and physical health<sup>7</sup>

Healthy relationships are key to combatting loneliness, and 8.5% of adults in Wirral said they were often or always feeling lonely, compared to 5% across the UK<sup>8</sup>, and disabled people are nearly 4 times as likely to report often or always feeling lonely<sup>9</sup>.

We estimate that this could mean around 20,000 people in Wirral who have disabilities feel lonely often or all the time.

There is a strong Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Wirral with over 2,539 providers supported by over 4,000 paid staff and 18,000 regular volunteers<sup>10</sup>. These providers offer a huge range of opportunities, from health and wellbeing support to social events and sports clubs<sup>11</sup>. We need to ensure people are aware of these opportunities.



## Where we need to focus



We need to ensure people have the right opportunities to be involved in their communities, socialise, and have romantic relationships. To do this we will:

- ensure the right activities are on offer to support people to socialise. For example, this may be disco or karaoke, or 'friend shops'. We will be having regular conversations with you to ensure we offer the right sorts of activities, including in the community.
- work with Sexual Health Wirral<sup>12</sup> and other Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprises to ensure people who want it are empowered to have safe and fulfilling sex lives.



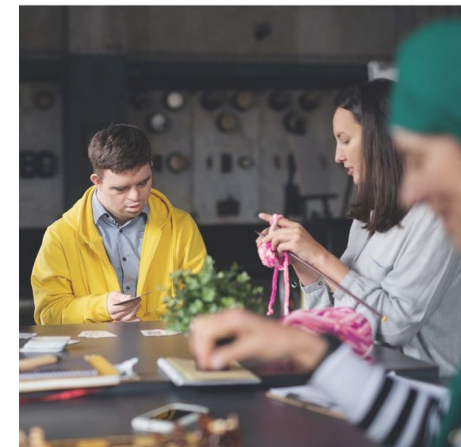
We need to ensure opportunities are accessible and people are safe. To do this we will:

- team up with other parts of the council, such as the Parks and Countryside Service, to make outdoor places accessible.
- work with partners, such as the Wirral Council for Voluntary Service<sup>13</sup>, to help communities learn more about people with disabilities to ensure the VCFSE sector welcomes and includes people with disabilities.



We need to improve information about opportunities, including a service directory of activities. To do this we will:

- raise awareness of what's on offer in Wirral, including through the VCFSE sector. For example, our newly launched SENDLO website<sup>14</sup> that brings together information about the local services and support available to those 0-25 with special education needs and/or disabilities.
- work with staff to ensure they know how to signpost people to opportunities.



We know there are some things we will need to consider when supporting people to live enriched lives.

For example, issues with staying up late and staffing evening activities. It is important that people feel valued and worthy, so it is important we remove barriers people face to doing activities they want to do. To do this we will:

- work with colleagues in commissioning and care providers to consider and address barriers to fulfilling activities.



# Living Independent Lives

We know there is a fine line between independence and isolation.

So, helping people to live as independently as they can or want to cannot happen without improvement in the other areas of this strategy: helping people be healthy, living enriched lives and having a fulfilling job and good economic wellbeing.



## What you told us

- You want more options and support for housing, for example more independent options, accessible properties, support to help with mortgages.
- You want to build life skills, for example travelling around the community, going to appointments independently, being safe at home and out-and-about.
- You want more people to be able to access technology and do so safely.

## What else do we know

**75%**

of people with learning disabilities or autistic people in Wirral live with family or in supported living, compared to 7% who have a private tenancy or own their own home.

[here.](#)

We know that people with disabilities benefit from living in housing where they have more independence<sup>15</sup>. People achieve better outcomes when they are empowered to understand their housing options and are supported to live independently within their community<sup>16</sup>, for example renting or buying a home. We know that living independently only works if homes are accessible, and you have the right adaptations and support<sup>17</sup>.

We know that moving into a new home is a big change and we need to provide good, personalised support and a 'moving on plan'<sup>18</sup> to help people transition to their new home. Wirral resident Thomas is a great example of the possible benefits of planning a slow transition, and we are committing to taking on board his top tips. [You can read Thomas' story and his top tips for planning a move](#)

Most transport policies that apply to Wirral are focused on helping people with disabilities to their school, college, or workplace.

Technology is a huge part of modern life, from talking to friends and family, to accessing your bank, to booking a doctor's appointment. Technology can also assist to make daily life easier<sup>19</sup>. We need to ensure that people have access to the right technology, have the skills to make the most of it and use it safely.

“  
Talk to people about housing options  
– Adults Coproduction Forum  
”

“  
Bus passes should work all hours, not just 9 to 5  
– SEND Youth Voice  
”

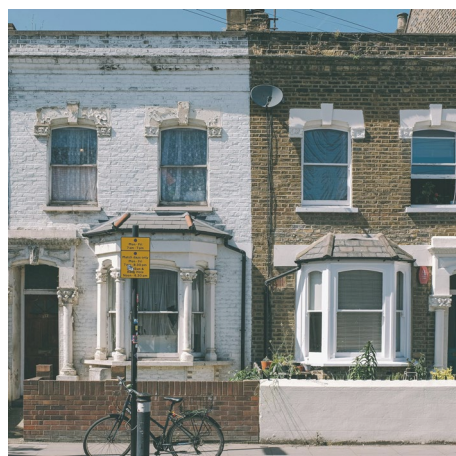


## Where we need to focus



We need to ensure we have a good offer for those aged 14-25 years old who are preparing for adulthood. To do this we will:

- improve adult social care's contributions to Education, Health, and Care Plans for those who may have adult social care involvement in the future.
- coproduce a Transitions Protocol that will ensure everyone – including the people who work in services – know what to expect when a young person transitions to adult services.
- work to update our information, advice and guidance for young people, parents and carers on preparing for adulthood.



We need to make more different types of housing available, and that people are supported to achieve their housing goals, so more people are living in their first choice of accommodation. To do this we will:

- follow the strategy that has been coproduced for Cheshire and Merseyside, and design and deliver an action plan to make this happen in Wirral.
- continue to develop schemes to help people have their 'own front door' while living with support.



We need to ensure people have the skills to travel independently, and that public spaces are accessible to enable people to do this. To do this we will:

- we will collaborate with partners like Merseytravel and other council departments like the Parks and Countryside team to ensure Wirral's public spaces are accessible. For example, making sure accessibility is not an afterthought.
- broadening our current travel offer to ensure people with disabilities can access communities beyond education and employment opportunities and ensure this is available to all ages.



We need to develop ways to improve people's digital skills. To do this we will:

- develop a digital delivery plan to ensure people with disabilities can use the technology they want and need.

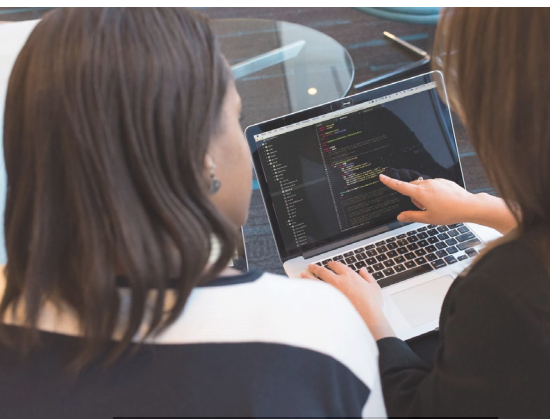


# Employment and Economic Wellbeing



There are lots of options for employment: from an interior designer or a politician, a dance teacher or video game designer to performer on the West End<sup>1</sup>. We need to have belief in people's abilities and ensure people can choose what they want to do in the future.

**Sometimes people are not offered the same opportunities because of their disability, and education settings and employers don't take the steps people need to best support them. This needs to change to ensure people feel valued and realise their potential.**



## What you told us

- You need a variety of accessible education and training opportunities for all ages.
- You need good planning for when people start a new school or college, and good support to help them stay there, for example peer support, buddies, disability mentors.
- You need better paid work opportunities with lots of different employers, especially small businesses, and ensure there is support in place to help people get a job, start working and stay in their job long term.
- You need more information, advice, and training on managing money, benefits, and financial independence, for example offering bite size workshops and making information available in easy read.
- You often face barriers to working because earning an income could risk any financial support you receive because of your disability.

“

*Have job coaches and run employer awareness training*  
– Adults Coproduction Forum

”

“

*Develop a scheme to share inclusive practices between special and mainstream schools and colleges*  
– All Age Disability Partnership Board

”

“

*“Everyone needs to have an education in which their individual needs are met”*  
– Parent Survey

”

<sup>1</sup> SEND Youth Voice Members

## What else we know

# 3.1%

of adults with a learning disability in Wirral were in paid employment in 2021.

This compared to **5.1%** across England<sup>1</sup>.

The Wirral Community Wealth Building Strategy 2020-25 sets out aims to support all residents to find employment in stable, well-paid jobs, with more residents in education, employment, or training, helped into work, earning the Real Living Wage.

The Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27<sup>20</sup> sets out a clear priority to support people to stay in jobs, especially if they are vulnerable, as some people with disabilities are. We need to support more people into work, and there are many good examples that we can learn from of how best to do this<sup>21</sup>.

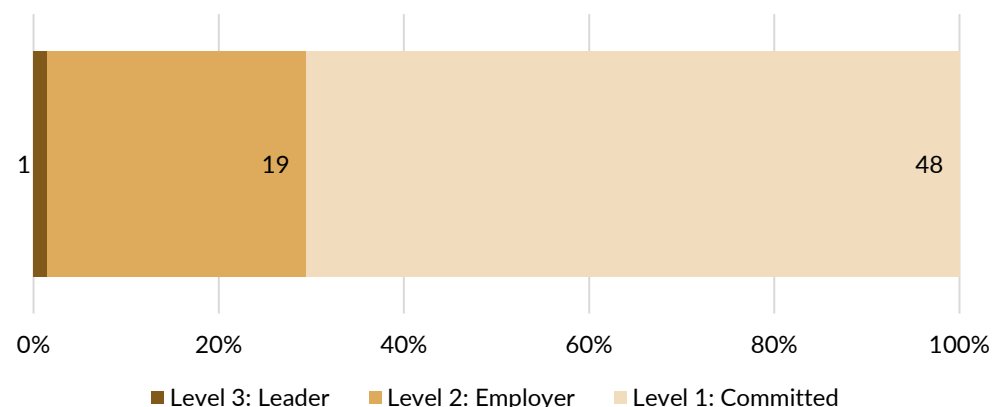
Wolverhampton City Council<sup>22</sup> increased the percentage of people with disabilities in paid employment from 2% in 2014 to 9.7% in 2019. They did this through giving good employment support, which included:

- encouraging young people to think what job they might want in the future.
- training staff who write Education, Health, and Care Plans to think about employment.
- raising awareness with employers about the benefits of employing people with disabilities.
- working with employers to support people when they start a new job.
- developing partnerships across organisations.

One of the main barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities is employers' attitudes, including stigma<sup>23</sup>. We need to do more to ensure employers are confident to employ people with care and support needs. There are currently 68 Disability Confident Employers in Wirral<sup>24</sup> (see graph).



Disability Confident Employers in Wirral December 2023





## Where we need to focus



We need to improve opportunities for people to learn about managing their money. To do this we will:

- develop a Money Management Plan to make sure people are supported to have financial independence.
- work with partners and the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise sector to ensure people have access to age-appropriate - and advice on money management.



We need to develop a coordinated and joined-up supported employment offer. We will do this via our Supported Employment Strategy, which will ensure:

- people gain and sustain employment.
- job seekers are confident, prepared, and motivated to find work.
- employers are confident to employ people with care and support needs.
- the transitions process from age 14 fosters a culture of high expectations and planning of pathways to employment.
- the workforce has the skills, knowledge, and competencies to deliver the supported employment offer.



# Making it Happen



We will coproduce a Delivery Plan to ensure we make this strategy a reality. As part of our commitment to coproduction, we will continue to work with people with lived experience, their parents and carers as well as staff, practitioners and volunteers to make a clear and realistic plan that details the specific steps we need to take to achieve our goals in each area, and which goals we will prioritise first.

## How we will know it has worked

When we develop our Delivery Plan, we will set out the specific measures we will use to track our progress against each part of the plan. This plan will be published and made available to the public, along with the list of measures we will track including where we are now, so everyone can see the progress we are making.

## Ensuring accessibility of this strategy

It is important that everyone has access to this Strategy. This strategy is available in easy read and large print. You can also request a copy of this Strategy in other formats and languages.

## Enabling actions

As a council there are several enabling priorities we need to ensure are in place so we can deliver across all areas of this Strategy. These are:

- Providing good information and advice
- Having a structure in place for effective coproduction
- Using data to inform where we most need to improve
- Building on people's strengths
- Developing our workforce
- Planning so we have the resources we need in the future.

## Governance and responsibility

As you told us, we need to be open, honest, and transparent about our progress and any barriers we face. We cannot be defensive, give excuses or avoid any issues.

Responsibility for this Strategy and the Delivery Plan will sit with the All Age Disability Partnership Board, who report to the Adults Social Care and Public Health Committee and the Wirral Place Partnership Board.







We would like to thank everyone who has taken time to contribute to this Strategy. It has been wonderful to work with so many lovely people.



This Strategy has been coproduced by Facilitate Consultancy in partnership with Wirral Council





# References

All links are correct at time of publishing.

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- <sup>3</sup> Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership (2023) Health and Care Interim Strategy
- <sup>4</sup> Wirral Place Based Partnership (2023) Wirral Place Health and Care Plan
- <sup>5</sup> Wirral Council (2023) Wirral Working Together: A Council Plan for 2023-27
- <sup>6</sup> Wirral Intelligence Service (2022) Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27
- <sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics (2019) Disability Wellness and Loneliness in the UK
- <sup>8</sup> NHS Practitioner Health (unknown date) Disability, Health, and Wellbeing: The relationship between disability, health and wellbeing
- <sup>9</sup> NHS England (unknown date) Personalised care and support planning
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- <sup>12</sup> NHS Sexual Health Wirral (2024) What we offer
- <sup>13</sup> wcv.org.uk
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- <sup>21</sup> NDTI (unknown date) Preparing for Adulthood Resources
- <sup>22</sup> NDTI (2019) Employment Case Study: Wolverhampton
- <sup>23</sup> Mencap (2020) Employment - what we think
- <sup>24</sup> UK Government (2023) Employers that have signed up to the Disability Confident scheme