



# Living My Best Life

**Staffordshire's Plan for Disabled  
and Neurodivergent People  
2023 - 2028**

**Easy Read**

# Disabled and Neurodivergent People



This plan is for and about **disabled** and **neurodivergent people**.

What do these words mean?

**Disabled people** – anyone with a medical condition (physical or mental) that is long-term and affects how they live their lives.

Some examples are people with mobility issues (like wheelchair users) or people with sight loss.



**Neurodivergent people** – anyone whose brain works in a different way to most people.

This might affect how they understand information or how they share their thoughts.

Not all neurodivergent people are seen as disabled. If their neurodiversity affects their life, some people might still need some extra support.

Some examples of neurodivergence are autistic people and people with dyslexia or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

*Note - we have a different plan all about mental health. You can find it here:*



# About Living My Best Life



Lots of disabled and neurodivergent people live happy lives but some don't have the same chances that other people do.



Living My Best Life aims to help make Staffordshire a place where all disabled and neurodivergent people can live their best lives.



Living My Best Life is a joint plan written by Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB) - the organisation that runs lots of health services in our area).



Before writing Living My Best Life, we held meetings and spoke to people from all over Staffordshire.



We listened to disabled and neurodivergent people, carers and families, health and social care staff, politicians and local organisations that support people.



# About Living My Best Life



Living My best Life aims to raise awareness and remove the barriers people face. Their disability or neurodivergence should not come first; the person should.



The new Staffordshire Disability Partnership Board is there to check changes are starting to happen and the ideas in Living My Best Life are making things better.



We would like to thank everyone who has been a part of this plan so far. We know it will take years, not months for big things to happen.



We hope that with lots of work from us, our partners and the community, we can make life better for disabled and neurodivergent people in Staffordshire.

Staffordshire County Council:

Councillor Julia Jessel - Cabinet Member for Health and Care

Councillor Mark Sutton - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Councillor Jonathan Price - Cabinet Member for Education and SEND

Dr Richard Harling, MBE - Director of Health and Care

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board:

David Pearson, MBE - Non-Executive Chair

Peter Axon - Interim Chief Executive Officer

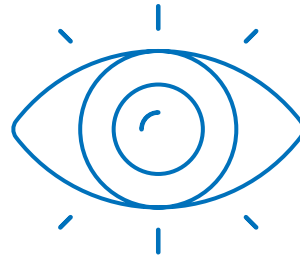
## What We Know



**6 in 100**  
adults aged  
18 to 65  
have  
problems  
with their  
mobility



**3 in 100**  
adults aged  
18 to 65  
have  
serious  
hearing loss



**2 in 100**  
adults aged  
18 to 65  
have serious  
visual  
impairment  
or sight loss



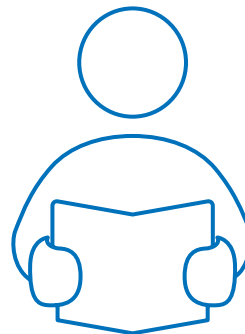
**1 in 100**  
adults aged  
18 to 65  
and **2 in 100**  
under 18s  
are autistic



**3 to 4 in 100**  
people  
have ADHD



**3 in 100**  
people have  
Fetal Alcohol  
Spectrum  
Disorder



**2 to 3 in 100**  
people have  
a learning  
disability



**1 in 1000**  
people have  
Down's  
Syndrome



Drinking a lot of alcohol when you are pregnant can damage your baby's health and affect them for all their life. This is called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

## What We Know



Some disabled and neurodivergent people face lots of barriers in getting out and doing everyday things in their community.



They may feel lonely and unsafe and they might be at higher risk of being a victim of crime or abuse.



They may have problems using digital technology like computers, phones, tablets and the internet.



Disabled and neurodivergent people generally have worse health and live shorter lives.



About half of all people with a learning disability have at least one serious health problem.

## What We Know



Disabled people are less likely to own their own homes and more likely to live with their parents, than non-disabled people.



Only about 1 in 3 of the disabled or autistic adults who are able to work, have a paid job. When they do have jobs, they earn less money than non-disabled people.



Some disabled and neurodivergent people have never been diagnosed (officially told by a doctor) with their medical condition.



Some people don't want anyone to know about their disability or neurodivergence so they keep it private.



Some conditions are 'hidden disabilities.' This means they can't be easily seen by other people. Some examples of hidden disabilities are chronic pain (pain that lasts a long time), epilepsy or brain injuries.



## What People Told Us



We held lots of meetings and had online workshops in early 2023. We sent out surveys and met with people from all over Staffordshire to help us think about what needed to be in Living My Best Life.



In general, we found that disabled and neurodivergent people have good contact and support with friends and family.



We found that people live in places that feel like home and where they can do what they want.



We also found that disabled and neurodivergent people are supported by people who listen to them and understand their needs.



We also found out about some of the problems or barriers disabled and neurodivergent people have in their everyday lives.



## What People Told Us



We found that disabled and neurodivergent people don't have as many chances as they would like to learn new things.



We found that people don't know enough about activities and services in their communities.



We also found that people don't get as much help and support when they need it.



We also found that disabled and neurodivergent people don't have as much choice and control over their own lives as they would like.



Young disabled and neurodivergent people under 18 told us they don't always feel respected or listened to.

# What People Told Us



In our meetings and workshops, people talked about what would help disabled and neurodivergent people live their best lives.



For adults (anyone over 18) the top 5 things were:



1. Family, friends and relationships
2. Access to health and social care and their local community



3. A safe home that meets their needs

4. Social skills, a social life and getting out and about

5. Learning and education



For children and young people (up to 18 years old) the top 5 things were:

1. Good experiences of education

2. Social skills, a social life and getting out and about

3. Family, friends and relationships

4. Person-centred support and services that fit their needs

5. Personal safety



# Our Vision for Living My Best Life



*We want Staffordshire to become a place where disabled and neurodivergent people can do what matters to them; where they feel valued and treated as equals in their community; and where they can live a healthier and better life for longer.*

## 5 Outcomes (things that should happen)



Living My best Life has 5 main outcomes. These are:

1. Staffordshire is more open and equal for everyone.
2. Stronger partnerships that are built around and include disabled and neurodivergent people.
3. Disabled and neurodivergent people can say what they need and get support to make it happen.
4. Disabled and neurodivergent people and their carers have more information and control.
5. Health and Social Care services will think about all the person's needs and what they can do. They won't stop people doing what they want to do.



## Outcome 1: Staffordshire is more open and equal for everyone.



This plan will make sure training and awareness raising about disability and neurodivergence can happen:

- in schools and colleges
- to people in the community
- to local businesses.



This plan will make sure there is detailed, specialist training for staff working in:

- schools and colleges
- emergency services (police, fire and paramedics)
- health and social care services
- housing and transport
- criminal justice (the courts).



Our Celebrating Differences campaign has worked well to raise awareness about learning disability and autism.

Now we want to make it about all disabled and neurodivergent people. We will use this to share good practice and use people's stories about their own lives to help others.

## Outcome 2: Stronger partnerships that are built around and include disabled and neurodivergent people.



The County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) will support the work of the Disability Partnership Board (DPB).

The Disability Partnership Board (DPB) will check how this plan is working and give a voice to disabled and neurodivergent people (as well as carers and families) by listening to their thoughts and ideas.



This plan will look at ways to make sure services like housing, health and employment think about the needs of disabled and neurodivergent people.



We (Staffordshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board) will work closely together where we can to make life better for people.



This plan will aim to help more businesses set up safe spaces for people in their communities.



Adults in Staffordshire can get help and advice from Community Help Points. Children and young people can get help from Family Hubs.

Staff called Community Navigators help people find help, advice and support. They also find information about useful, fun and important things happening in their community. This plan will make sure they work well with disabled and neurodivergent people.

### **Outcome 3: Disabled and neurodivergent people can say what they need and get support to make it happen.**



We will make sure there are lots of ways for disabled and neurodivergent people to have a voice (self advocacy), to speak up, to be heard and change how services and support work.



Our Celebrating Differences programme will encourage people to ask 'how can I help you?' to find out how they can make reasonable adjustments to help you.

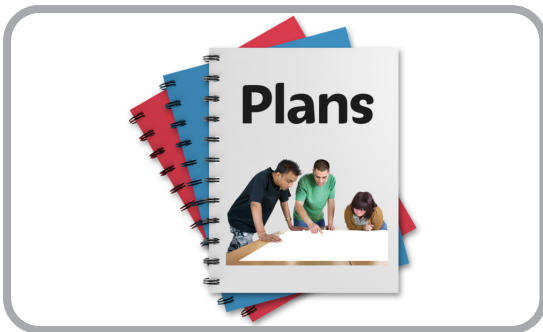


We can look at ways to support peer networks (groups of people with the same interests and experiences) to have a voice.





We can look at how we, the County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and other organisations work with, talk to and share information with peer networks.



This plan is about working to make sure disabled and neurodivergent people, their families and carers are part of helping us write other new plans.



This plan is about looking at ways to make it easier for people to tell us in their own way what they need to help them get the best services and support.



This plan is about looking at ways to make sure Health Passports are used by staff and services to help them understand people's needs.



This plan is about learning from the LeDeR programme (LeDeR looks at what happened when someone with a learning disability or autism dies, to see if anything could have been done better).

## Outcome 4: Disabled and neurodivergent people and their carers have more information and control.



This plan is about asking people how they prefer to get information and advice that suits their needs, disability or neurodivergence.



This could mean looking at different formats like Easy Read or finding new ways to share information.



This plan will help look at ways to support people to use digital technology and linking people to information and advice about things like:

- paying bills
- filling in online forms
- finding disabled facilities such as Changing Places toilets
- coping with big changes in life like transition to adulthood or becoming a parent
- finding specialist equipment and support
- new skills for carers that help them cope with the needs of the people they care for.

## Outcome 5: Health and Social Care services will think about all the person's needs and what they can do. They won't stop people doing what they want to do.



We will use a **strengths-based approach** across health and social care services. This means thinking about what people can do and what they want to do, not what they can't do.



Working this way in everything we do (like service and care planning, assessments and checking on services) will help people have more choice and control of their lives.



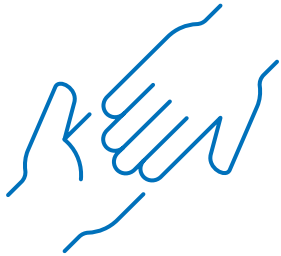
We will try to lower the number of disabled and neurodivergent people having worse health than others. We will do this by making reasonable adjustments, helping people get help early on and helping them get the information they need to take care of themselves.



We will make sure our services are safe, good quality and good value for money. One way of doing this is working closely together as a County Council and Integrated Care Board (ICB).



## Our approach (ways of working)



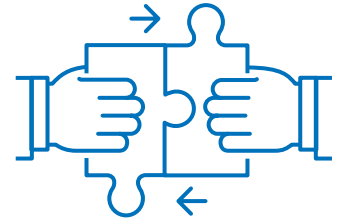
Helping people to help themselves through information and advice



Support and services based on what people can do



Supporting people to have more choice and control of their own lives



Building support in communities by recognising everyone has a part to play



Encouraging reasonable adjustments and having staff and communities that ask 'how can I help you?'

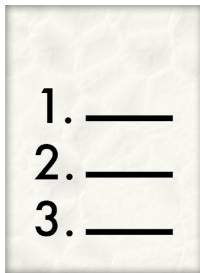


Making our work about people and making decisions with them



Supporting people with digital technology and information

# Checking on Living My Best Life



We will write an action plan based on the 5 Outcomes in Living My Best Life.



The Disability Partnership Board (DPB) will meet every 4 months and will check on the Living My Best Life action plan.



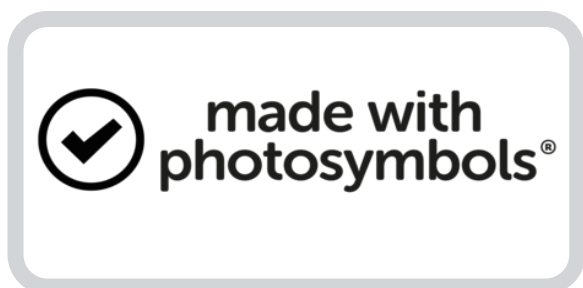
The Disability Partnership Board (DPB) will give an update on the Living My Best Life action plan to the Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board every year.





This strategy was made into Easy Read by Reach, a community advocacy project supporting people to speak up about their lives in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

For more information about our work, please contact:  
**[reach@asist.co.uk](mailto:reach@asist.co.uk)**



Thank you to Photosymbols for the images used in this report.



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