

Learning Disabilities and Autism Strategy

2025-2028

Learning Disability
and Autism Team



FOREWORD

At Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT), we are committed to ensuring that all individuals - regardless of ability - have equitable access to the safe, compassionate, and personalised care they deserve.

This Learning Disabilities and Autism Strategy 2025-2028 sets out our clear ambition to embed inclusivity at the heart of everything we do. It reflects our deep responsibility, as a healthcare provider, to create an environment where people with learning disabilities, and Autistic people are not only seen and heard, but respected and empowered.

People with learning disabilities and Autism continue to face unacceptable health inequalities and barriers to care. Through this strategy, we acknowledge that making reasonable adjustments is not simply a legal requirement - it is a fundamental aspect of good clinical care. We recognise the lived experiences of our patients and their families, and we are committed to transforming these insights into meaningful improvements across our services.

This strategy is built on three core pillars: **Respecting and Protecting Rights, Inclusion and Engagement**, and **Workforce Development**. It aligns with national standards, legislative frameworks, and our Trust's wider improvement commitments. From the launch of our "Diamond Pathway" and strengthened Health Passport promotion, to the active involvement of people with lived experience through our Patient Partner programme, this strategy outlines practical, measurable steps to improve care and outcomes.

Our commitment is to not only meet, but exceed expectations, ensuring our workforce is confident, our culture is inclusive, and our systems are responsive. By working in partnership with patients, families, carers, and colleagues across the system, we will continue to challenge inequality and co-create a future where every patient is valued and cared for as an individual.

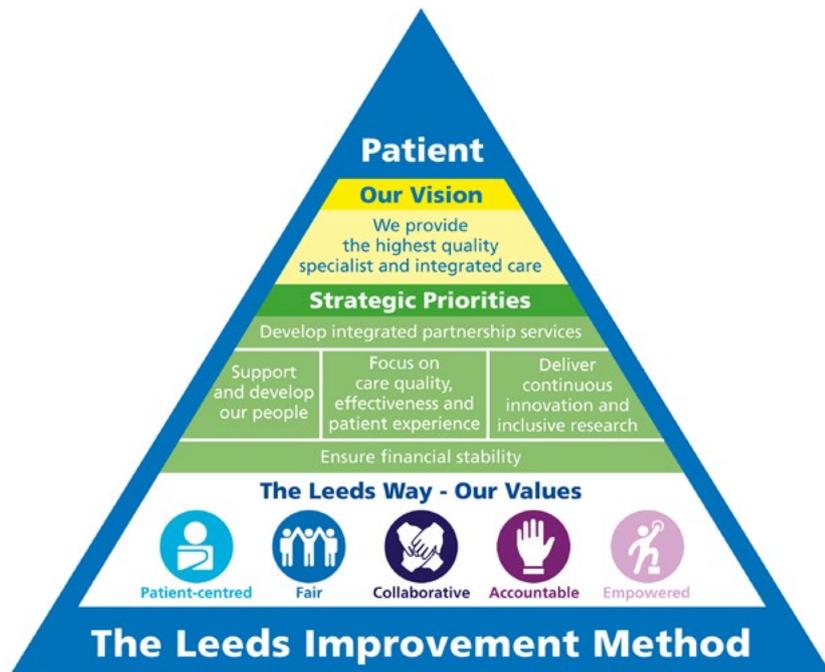
We are proud to launch this strategy and look forward to delivering the positive changes our patients and their families rightly expect and deserve.



Beverley Geary
Chief Nurse

OUR STRATEGY

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust is an ambitious organisation with a clear vision to provide the highest quality specialist and integrated care. Our vision, values and strategic priorities are summarised in our strategic triangle below, which shows patients at the centre of everything we do.



- One of the **largest teaching hospitals** in the country
- A **regional and national centre for specialist treatment** and the **local hospital for the Leeds community**
- **Seven hospitals** across **five sites** in the city
- Treat around **1.6 million patients** every year
- Spend around **£1.9 billion** each year
- Almost **22,000 staff**
- Established **Centre of Excellence** for Research and Innovation at scale and a top recruiter for clinical trials

Our mission:

to be an internationally renowned academic healthcare institution, working in partnership to deliver the highest quality, safe, effective and innovative care which improves outcomes.

To support delivery of the strategy, we have seven multi-year goals which drive our long term activity and seven annual commitments which are refreshed each year to consolidate our in-year priorities.

Our multi-year goals are:

- Support our patients to get home a day sooner.
- Recognise and act upon moments that matter to our patients.
- Be in the top 25% for patient experience and efficiency in outpatients
- Support each other to act with kindness and compassion.
- Support our staff to manage every pound wisely.
- Make best use of our estate, equipment and digital assets.
- Reduce our carbon footprint by creating greener patient pathways.

Our 7 annual commitments are available on our [website](#).



The Leeds Way

The Leeds Way is what we stand for and what we want to achieve. It is how we do things around here and what makes Leeds Teaching Hospitals different to other organisations. The Leeds Way is described in our strategic triangle; it encompasses our ambition through our vision and strategic priorities and our culture through our values, as created by our staff. It sets out what our stakeholders can expect from us as a Trust.



Patient-centred



Fair



Collaborative



Accountable



Empowered

The Leeds Improvement Method

The Leeds Improvement Method (LIM) is our philosophy of continuous improvement that underpins all our organisational strategies. It brings the principles of daily management methods, improvement methodology, respectful behaviours and the removal of waste from processes together.

Our strategy framework

The Learning Disabilities and Autism strategy is part of a wider suite of strategies that work together to support the Trust to meet its overarching vision. At the centre of this is the Trust's corporate strategy, supported by three core strategies and eleven enabling strategies. This strategy forms part of the Health Equity & Public Health enabling strategy.

Our strategy framework enables us to ensure our strategies align and are updated appropriately to reflect and support the overall Trust strategy.



BACKGROUND

The core value for learning disability and Autism at Leeds Teaching Hospitals is that all patients are treated as individuals and services make efforts to understand the patient alongside making reasonable adjustments so equitable access to healthcare is always offered and delivered.

Meeting the needs of patients with a learning disability and or Autistic people is the responsibility of the whole organisation in line with the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Equality Act 2010.

A learning disability is defined by the Department of Health and Social Care 2001 as "a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood".

A learning disability is different for everyone. In all cases learning disability is a lifelong condition.

Learning disability and intellectual disability are interchangeable titles, and both mean the same. There are many other ways people may refer to a learning disability however these are the two accepted terms.

A learning disability is different to a learning difficulty, which is a reduced ability for a specific form of learning and includes conditions such as dyslexia (reading) or dyspraxia (affecting physical coordination). A person with a learning disability may also have one or more learning difficulties.

Autism is a lifelong condition which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. The definition of Autism has changed over decades and may change in future as we understand more about Autistic people. It is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways. Like all people, Autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses (based on the definition from National Autistic Society).

STRATEGIC AIMS

Our Learning Disability and Autism Strategy supports the Trust's mission to be an internationally renowned academic healthcare institution, working in partnership to deliver the highest quality, safe, effective, and innovative care which improves outcomes.

GOALS

To support the delivery of this strategy we have identified our goals which drive our long-term ambition and are done in line with the organisation's seven improvement commitments.

In addition to the organisation's seven improvement commitments, we are also aligning our goals with the National Learning Disability Improvement Standards for NHS Trusts.





Respecting and Protecting Rights

The Learning Disability Improvement Standard explains “All trusts must ensure that they meet their Equality Act Duties to people with learning disabilities, autism or both, and that the wider human rights of these people are respected and protected as required by the Human Rights Act.”

Goals and ambitions

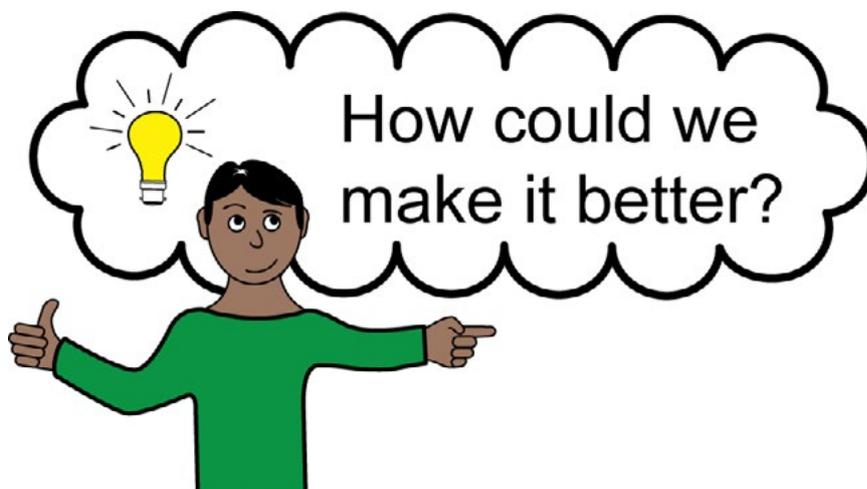
- To have a clearly defined pathway that follows a patient journey model which can be utilised across all inpatient and outpatient areas irrespective of mode of admission.
- All staff delivering patient care will have a way to access patient centred and individualised information in a predictable format, so they are able to implement reasonable adjustments.

How we will achieve this

- The launch of the “Diamond Pathway” – this will be a pathway setting recommendations for patients with a learning disability and Autism whether they are inpatients or outpatients, elective or acute. The pathway will be launched in conjunction with a ‘Learning Disability and Autism Policy’ setting standards for the workforce in line with Improvement Standards, NICE Guidance, Equality Act 2010 and Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- We will continue our Health Passport promotion work across the region. While also focusing on our digital solutions to ensure that patients only share their reasonable adjustments once and receive the right adjustments at the front door.
- Work with our digital partners and Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust stakeholders to create a Reasonable Adjustment Care plan which will be accessible in line with our Electronic Patient Record system.

How we will measure this

- We will use data from direct observation of our processes to give an explicit understanding of what is going well and what needs improvement.
- We will utilise our governance structure focusing on patient outcomes, length of patient admissions, readmission statistics, was not brought and did not attend data to quantify if our strategic goals are having real time impact on patient care.
- We will undertake a quarterly review of friends and family feedback.
- Our annual audit will be renewed to incorporate patient feedback and real time discussions with front line staff about their knowledge of meeting the needs of this specific patient group.
- We will work closely with other teams within the organisation to ensure learning disability and autism is incorporated in other assurance process' such as Ward Metrics.





Inclusion and Engagement

Every trust must ensure all people with learning disabilities, Autism or both and their families and carers are empowered to be partners in the care they receive.

Goals and ambitions

- To have our patient voice at the centre of all we do, to make sure our patients are heard, and their contribution is valued throughout the organisation, making improvement work and the wider healthcare system accessible to all as it will be designed by them for them.
- Quality improvement work will be embedded throughout the organisation. It will be intelligence led and outcomes will be measurable.

How we will achieve this

- By creating a robust support structure for our people with lived experience, so that they may contribute and be valued within the organisations. This will align with the wider Trust program for Patient Partner Voices setting out clear roles and levels of contribution. This will open our program to a wider group and increase the amount and quality of feedback we receive.
- Our Patient Partner Champion program will enable people with lived experience to contribute across the Trust collaborative programs ensuring the needs of people with a learning disability and Autistic people are considered at every level of the organisation.
- We want to increase the number of our learning-disabled patients that give feedback via our friends and family test currently this sits around only 20% patients and 80% from Autistic Patients
- We will complete an internal clinical audit yearly focussing on the patient experience and quality of their care.
- We will start co-production workshops to further enhance our co-production work.
- We will create a dashboard to capture real time data around patient interactions – length of stay, emergency re-admission rate, 7-day reattendance to ED rates, number of patient alerts, DNA and was not brought figures for OPA. This will highlight gaps and risks to service provision.

- Incidents, concerns, and complaints will continue to be reviewed in real time and thematically allowing rapid initiation of improvement projects when risks or gaps identified.
- The Learning Disability and Autism Team will continue to support the LeDeR program on a local, regional, and national level ensuring all learning shared.
- The Learning Disability and Autism Team will continue to support the NHS Benchmarking for the Learning Disabilities and Autism annual audit programme.

How we will measure this

- The number of active Patient Partners will be recorded.
- Participation will be recorded.
- Co-production workshops will be registered, and actions recorded.
- Dashboard data will be presented at quarterly steering group to monitor themes and trends across wider team.
- Collaborative meetings will be registered, and actions recorded.
- Reference groups will be chaired by people with lived experience and actions recorded.
- Easy read leaflet production is recorded and reported via the Patient Information Forum.
- LeDeR and NHS Benchmarking annual reports will be presented via Team governance and the Mortality Improvement Group.

hospital





Workforce

All trusts must have the skills and capacity to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, Autism, or both by providing safe and sustainable staffing, with effective leadership at all levels.

Goals and ambitions

- Understand the training requirements for Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust workforce, in line with the Core Capabilities Framework for Learning Disabilities and Autism and the final Code of Practice for the implementation of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training (OMMT) on learning disabilities and Autism.
- Staff Champions programme - build capacity in the wider workforce through having department/ward based local champions that are confident in making reasonable adjustments and promoting learning disabilities and Autism awareness and good practice within their teams.
- Ensure that all training offers are co-produced and co-delivered with co-trainers that have lived experience of learning disabilities and Autism.
- Team webpage on the Staff Intranet. Ensure that the resources available to Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust staff via the team's intranet page are promoted as an alternative source of information and advice.

How we will achieve this

- Through a training needs analysis in conjunction with Organisational Learning.
- Completion of an indicative costs model to demonstrate the cost impact.
- Work with other Leeds NHS organisations and the Local Authority to ensure a Leeds wide approach; this is the agreed approach by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for the funds from the national start up budget.
- Summary of this to be escalated to the Executive Board via the Chief Nurse.
- The Staff Champion programme will be supported through our governance structure and the introduction of Champion Leads for all Clinical Service Units (CSUs).
- Trainers with lived experience of learning disabilities and Autism are offered paid work at the appropriate level of pay through the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust Staff Bank.

How we will measure this

- Training compliance records will be reviewed quarterly. This data will be incorporated in the dashboard for the governance at the SLDAG and at quarterly steering group.
- Training needs analysis will be used to allocate employees to Tier 1 or 2 of the OMMT Programme and this will be used to inform the indicative cost model and financial impact of the OMMT Programme.
- Trainers with Lived experience will co-produce and deliver training sessions. Attendance will be registered and evaluated.
- Completion of a Staff Champions Audit and a survey of the active Staff Champions at LHT. Targeted promotion of this role to areas that do not have a Staff Champion, through Heads of Service, Departmental Leads.
- Staff Champions are meeting twice a month online and this provides ongoing opportunities to promote further training and encourages skill development.
- Through feedback from the Staff Champions annual study day and bespoke training sessions on request.

workforce



Developed by: LTH Learning Disability and Autism Team

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