



SCHEDULE 2 - SERVICE SPECIFICATION

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SCHEDULE 2 - SERVICE SPECIFICATION

| Service | Feasibility Study of Autism Hub in City & Hackney |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Commissioner Lead | Penny Heron, Joint Commissioner for Learning Disabilities & Autism |
| Provider Lead | tbc |
| Period | May 2024 - May 2025 |
| Date of Review | |

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The [All Age Autism Strategy for City & Hackney \(2020-2025\)](#) identified setting up a hub as a key activity that would be undertaken locally; so London Borough of Hackney is exploring the development of a local Autism Hub.
- 1.1.2 The Provider will undertake a Feasibility Study to determine if an autism hub should be set up; how it will work and function; and how it can be made sustainable, considering the local environment and context.
- 1.1.3 It is anticipated that the research and completion of the study will take approximately 8 months, to a maximum of one year.
- 1.1.4 The provider will work with local experts with lived experience to explore what a digital/online autism hub should look like and scope around options for a physical hub. This will help to inform a potential business case.
- 1.1.5 The provider will scope out what a future hub could look like (including findings from previous engagement) for inclusion in a report that also considers sustainability issues and will make recommendations around feasibility and future sustainability.

1.2 Context & Overarching Aims

1.2.1 National Context

- 1.2.2 Autistic people are currently an underserved group, despite having a national strategy and The Autism Act (2009) that legislates for provision of and improved services for autistic people.

- 1.2.3 Across the UK there are various autism hub models which provide an opportunity to learn from and benchmark with. It is expected the Service will explore some of these as part of suggesting a good fit for Hackney.

1.2.4 Local Context

1.2.5 *Our Vision at Hackney:*

We are working to make Hackney a place for everyone. Where all residents, whatever their background, have a chance to lead healthy successful lives; a place of which everyone can be proud, with excellent services and public spaces, thriving businesses and strong communities; a place that celebrates diversity, and where everyone can feel valued, included and involved.

- 1.2.6 **The Hackney Community** - Historically Hackney has welcomed people from around the world and inward migration. There are well established Caribbean, Turkish and Kurdish, Vietnamese and Orthodox Jewish communities as well as newer communities of people from African countries and Eastern Europe.

- 1.2.7 The service is expected to support the celebration of diversity and support social cohesion locally, including an Antiracist Commitment and specifically autism acceptance.

- 1.2.8 In all City & Hackney's autism consultations one proposal that kept being raised was to establish a community "Hub."

- 1.2.9 This was later defined as: *A place or places where people who are autistic or who care for autistic people can meet, socialise, learn, get peer support and build up a library of knowledge and guidance. The hub could evolve from the expert by experience group, taking in support from other organisations.*

- 1.2.10 The local strategy identified: **General support for autistic people** - *We will...work with existing groups, including the experts by experience group, to empower individuals to set up an autistic led "Hub"*

- 1.2.11 Although not a statutory requirement, Autistic people in Hackney have identified that an autism hub could provide valuable advice, information and support to autistic people in Hackney and their carers (like a 'one-stop shop').

- 1.2.12 The provider will consider attributes and resources within the local area. For example, Hackney has a thriving voluntary and charity sector in addition to the statutory services.

- 1.2.13 The provider will take a neuro-affirming approach, rather than a deficit approach. This includes aligning to principles of the City & Hackney Autism Standards (see Appendix) and consideration of terminology used, with an aim to de-medicalise autism (identify-first descriptions such as 'autistic', 'autistic resident' or 'autistic community' rather than 'resident with autism').

1.3 Overarching Aims

1.3.1 ***Aim: Delivery of a thorough feasibility study into an Autism Hub for City & Hackney.***

1.3.2 The key deliverables can be summarised as follows. At the end of the process it is expected to have:

- A comprehensive feasibility study with options that will support commissioners and others to establish an Autism hub suitable for people in Hackney and viability of this.
- An output of the establishment of an interim accessible hub - that would allow Autistic people to have a base from which to coproduce and guide the feasibility study and final report.
- This interim hub would test some of the ideas of what a hub would look like; how it would operate; and test the recommendations in the report theory before final recommendations are made (this hub can be virtual and/or physical).

1.3.3 **Outcomes:**

- **Completed Report** with recommendations, containing considerations and costed options for both a digital hub and physical hub is submitted. This should include as a minimum:
 - Exploration of risks & management
 - Consideration of viability
 - Whether the hub should be both virtual and/or have a physical presence
 - A breakdown of expected costs, funding & financial sustainability of the hub/s
 - A guide to timeframes for potential implementation
 - Accessibility, including the use of the City & Hackney Autism Standards (appendix)
 - preferences and views of local autistic people and their carers and how this information has been gathered and incorporated into the report.
 - All age considerations
 - Review of pre-existing services with similar functions (including such hubs elsewhere).
 - Findings from the work done on an interim local hub.
 - Outline of options of involvement by the third and voluntary sector.

Digital Hub Options

- Considerations for website design
- Options around online chat and peer to peer connectivity
- Web complexity options explored with associated costs

Physical Hub Options

- Informed options and around what a physical all age autism hub would look like including structural, social, and hours of operation considerations
- Potential premises including community venues (such as Oswald St Resource Centre)
- Outline of sustainability considerations and options, including financial and potential options of how autistic people can be involved in or lead the running the hub; and how the hub may be run independently of statutory services.

1.3.4 The research should take place as soon as possible and incorporate pre-existing information, such as previous coproduction exercises.

1.3.5 It is anticipated that the project will take circa 8 months to complete, with the research element complete before this.

2.1 Service Requirements

2.1.1 The Service needs to have good research, analysis and engagement skills with autistic residents, while spending time understanding the Hackney context.

2.1.2 The Service will have/ or employ someone with technical skills to set up a digital hub.

2.1.3 It would be beneficial if the Service employed an autistic person as part of the project.

2.1.4 The service will be responsible for developing communications and hire of any venues for engagement; the Service should ensure these are accessible.

2.2 Co-production and involvement

2.3 Coproduction is an integral part of developing an autism hub and the service should involve and consider the views of autistic residents and their carers.

2.4 Staffing

2.4.1 The project should involve paid employment of at least one autistic person in an advisory and consultative capacity, in addition to the involvement of those with lived experience in the research.

2.4.2 The service should ensure the project lead has good research and communication skills, including data analysis, critiquing and report writing skills.

2.4.6 Peer Support Workers and Apprenticeships are encouraged.

2.6 Risk

2.6.1 The Service will ensure there is an up to date risk management policy in place.

2.6.2 The Service will ensure it has a Business Continuity Plan that is designed, maintained, reviewed and, where necessary, implemented by the Service to reduce, mitigate and/or negate the impact of failure of the services in whole or part.

2.7 Safeguarding

2.7.1. The Service is expected to comply with the Pan-London multi agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

3.1 Performance Management

3.1.1 Service Monitoring and Review

3.1.2 Monthly meetings will be held with commissioning throughout the project to provide updates on progress and findings.

3.1.3 A draft report will be submitted for review in advance of the project end date and for discussion in these meetings.

3.2 Activity Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

3.2.1 Contract management of this project will sit within Learning Disabilities & Autism Joint Commissioning.

3.2.2 Monitoring will involve monthly check-in meetings/ progress report updates with the commissioner. Specific meetings will include a launch meeting at the start and a review of findings and final report.

3.2.3 It is expected that the provider will be proactive in reporting e.g. any risk or issues that arise.

3.3 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Engagement with autistic residents around shaping the hub model, within the first 3 weeks of start. Minimum of 10 autistic individuals, but an expectation that numbers increase as study progresses.

- Engagement Sessions set up throughout project life, including a feedback session prior to project end (minimum of 4 sessions).
- Engagement with key stakeholders started within the first 6 weeks.
- An interim hub is set up that offers a resource of advice and guidance for autistic people within the first 6 weeks. Review of this completed at 18 weeks and key findings included within the final report.
- A completed report which includes a costed options appraisal and considerations around sustainability to develop an autism Hub locally (draft shared minimum of 4 weeks prior to project end; final version minimum of two weeks prior to end).

4. Payment

4.1 Pending the costings from the successful bidder; payments will be made in three stages:

| | | |
|----|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | 45% | Pump prime funding (mobilisation) |
| 2. | 45% | Phase two, following delivery of bidder identified milestones (of phase 1). |
| 3. | 10% | Delivery of a completed Feasibility Report as per specification. |

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Engagement Feedback Regarding an Autism Hub

Local Autistic Experts suggested the following aims around an Autism Hub:

- A place that is autistic friendly where autistic people and their carers can go and feel safe
- Somewhere where a range of support is offered in different ways - virtual, peer support, 1:1, specific advice etc
- Somewhere that has books, information and advice including access to various service (though services not run from there)
- A place that can have a positive impact on the community and help others' understanding & appreciation of autism.
- Somewhere that has a social aspect - autistic people can go for coffee.

More detailed information from feedback events will be provided to the successful bidder.

Appendix 2: [City & Hackney Autistic Friendly Standards](#)

Autistic people are unique and individual, like non autistic people. However, our experts by lived experience tell us there are some common themes. If we acknowledge and address these themes correctly, we can create spaces that are more welcoming and accessible for autistic people in our community.

With this in mind we have developed the [5 City and Hackney autistic friendly standards \(PDF 519kb\)](#). These are:

- listen to autistic voices
- celebrate autism acceptance
- make a commitment to understand autism
- make things predictable
- create a sensory friendly environment

We designed the standards for settings, organisations and places in City and Hackney to use as a self-audit tool. Using these standards will help them become more accessible to autistic people.

See a [digital version of City and Hackney autistic friendly standards](#).

Appendix 3: Key Stakeholders

Contact details can be provided for the below key stakeholders

- Commissioners & Integrated Commissioning Partnership Reps within City & Hackney
- City & Hackney Autism Diagnostic Service
- City & Hackney Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services
- City & Hackney Autism & LD Primary Care Inclusion Lead
- Hackney Autism Social Care Lead
- HCVS
- City & Hackney Integrated Learning Disabilities Service
- City of London Corporation - Children & Community Services
- Charities and groups running autism hubs/ autism groups within inner North East London
- Manager of Oswald Street Resource Centre