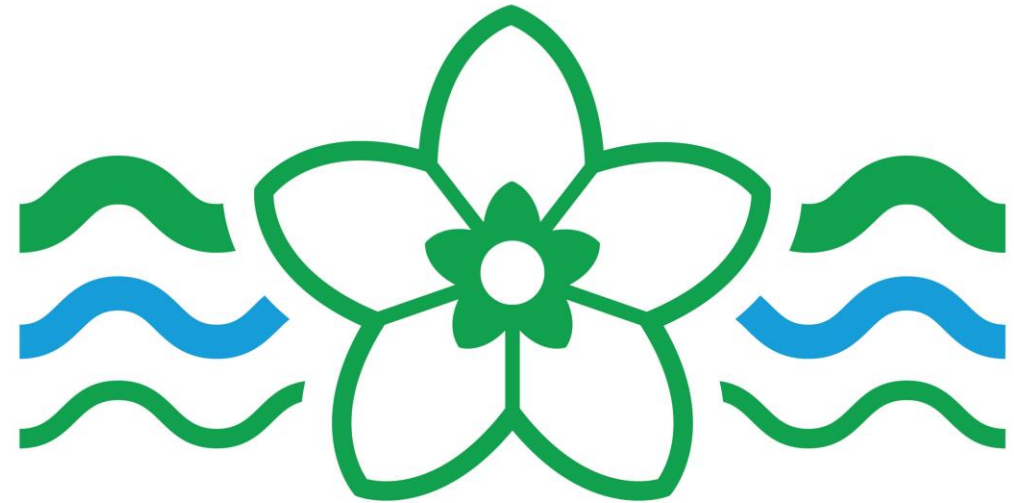


Joel Rasbash Strategic Policy
and Scrutiny Advisor -
Cumberland Council

Autism Councillor
Champions
Network
APSE Conference
25/5/23



**Cumberland
Council**

What this talk covers

How the
champions
network came
about

What they have
done

Their role in
raising awareness
of autism in the
local area.

The challenge

Scrutiny review in 2016 looked access to support for children and adults with autism

Found that families lacked access to community information and support

There was a post code lottery in services and support available

The solution



Set up a network of Councillor Autism Champions to raise awareness in their local area



Bring together Councillors, staff with neurodiverse conditions and professional leads (i.e., SEND, community services, strategic leads in Adult Social Care) to look at issues together



Provide Community Development Officer support to Councillors as champions on the ground

The impact

- ▶ Delivered a series of talks to major employers and organisations on autism awareness including at Sellafield - supporting their autism staff network
- ▶ Developed resources throughout the library services to raise awareness of autism with collections - 'Autism your questions answered'
- ▶ Worked with HR and neurodiverse staff to develop a managers' neurodiversity policy
- ▶ Developed FAQs on the Council website to explain their role and how they support people
- ▶ Put on events to strengthen peer support networks.

Legacy

- ▶ In 2023 a new Unitary authority Cumberland Council was created
- ▶ Only 1 of the Councillor champions is on the new Council and is working with the Executive to establish a more intensive network across 8 locality boards
- ▶ Looking to broaden the role to include wider neurodiversity support in the community
- ▶ Looking to strengthen the Councillors' role in championing families in the wider introduction of SEND reforms
- ▶ Working to promote autism and neurodiversity awareness as part of the wider ambition for Public Health to be at the heart of the Council

Further information



See Case Study on LGA Website

<https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/cumbria-county-council-autism-champions>



Media coverage of Autism Champions

<https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/20029639.cumbria-county-council-supports-world-autism-acceptance-week/>



Contact:

Joel Rasbash

joel.rasbash@cumbria.gov.uk

Cllr. Mike Hawkins

mike.hawkins@cumberland.gov.uk