

Autism and learning disability citizenship boards:

Often asked questions

Easy Read version



What are the Citizenship Boards?



The Citizenship Boards are being created to make sure that people with a learning disability and autistic people can have their voices heard within the Integrated Care System.



This means we can help the Integrated Care System make decisions about health and care across the North East and North Cumbria.



There are two Citizenship Boards



- A Learning Disability Board
- An Autism Board



The members of the boards are all people with a lived experience of a learning disability or autism.



Who can be a member?

People with a learning disability and autistic people, who live in the North East and North Cumbria can be members.



Members must be aged 18 or older.



Each board will have at least 26 members – 2 people from each local authority area.

We will offer extra spaces to people who often do not have their voices heard.



This includes:

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities



- People from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning LGBTQ+ community.



- People in long-stay hospitals.



How are the boards run?

The boards are run by Inclusion North and one of the board members.



Members vote for who they would like to be the co-chair.



The boards have 4 face-to-face meetings each year.



The meetings happen at different places across the region. This makes it more fair for people travelling long distances to the meetings.



The things we talk about in each board meeting are decided by board members.

What does it mean to be a member of the board?



Being a member of the board means you are choosing to share your views and experiences about health and care.

Being a member of the board is not a job, but it does mean you are agreeing to:



- Come to as many meetings as you can.



- Speak up at the meetings by sharing your ideas and lived experience.



- Listen to other people's experiences and views.



- Make suggestions and share ideas and speak up.

What do I have to do as a member of the board?



It is important to come to as many board meetings as you can.



In meetings, board members join in talking about health and care services.

This might include:



- Sharing personal experiences of health and care services if you want to.



- Sharing experiences and issues you have heard from people you know.

- Talking about what is working well.

- Talking about what is NOT working well.



- Talking about what could make things better.



Board members work together to think about the important topics we want to talk about in our meetings.



Sometimes we might invite people to come to our meetings and deliver a presentation or answer some questions.

Can I bring a support person with me to the board?



Yes, members are welcome to bring a support person to meetings. We can also send information about meetings to a support person.



Your support person can choose to claim a £75 involvement fee for supporting you with meetings, or their organisation can charge us this fee for their time.

We will also pay travel expenses for supporters.

Who are the Inclusion North co-chairs?



The Learning Disability Citizenship Board is co-chaired by Anya Bonner (North East Regional Manager, Inclusion North).



The Autism Citizenship Board is co-chaired by Hayley Matthews (North East Regional Manager, Inclusion North).

Are the boards accessible?

Yes, we do our best to make the boards as accessible as possible.



We do this by:



- Booking wheelchair friendly venues.

- Giving information in easy-read and plain English.



- Not using jargon or complicated language.



- Having fidget toys at meetings.
- Having a 'quiet room' for meetings (when possible).
- Asking members about support needs.
- Making reasonable adjustments to make sure all members can feel comfortable to take part in meetings.

I have a learning disability and I am autistic – can I sit on both boards?

You can only be on one board. This is so more people can be involved.

The two boards will share information.

Once a year both boards will come together for a joint meeting.

The organisation I am connected with covers more than one area – can I represent more than one area?

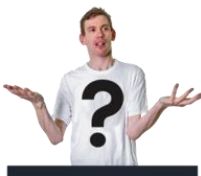


No – you can only represent one area.

The local authority areas we need members from are:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Cumbria | North Tyneside |
| Darlington | Northumberland |
| Durham | Redcar and Cleveland |
| Gateshead | South Tyneside |
| Hartlepool | Stockton-on-Tees |
| Middlesbrough | Sunderland |
| Newcastle | |

I am not connected to an organisation – can I be a member?



Yes, you can be a member even if you are not connected to a support or advocacy organisation.



I am in long-term stay in hospital and would find it hard to represent the area that I live in – can I still be a member?

Yes, you can still be a member.

We can talk to you about the best way for you to be involved and make a plan that works for you.

Will I get an involvement fee?



Members can claim involvement fees.

Involvement fees are £75 per half day or £150 for a full day.



If you are claiming benefits, you will need to tell the job centre about your involvement fees and check that it doesn't affect your benefits.

Inclusion North can give you a letter for the Job Centre and support you with this.



If you don't want to claim your involvement fee, you can speak to Inclusion North about donating it.

Will my travel be paid for?



Yes, members can claim travel expenses for getting to meetings.

Travel will be paid for members and their support.

What if I can't make all four meetings in a year – can I still be a member?



Yes, you can still be a member even if you can't make all four meetings per year.

It is really helpful if members can come to as many meetings as possible.



Can I join meetings online?

No, all of our meetings will be face-to-face.



Can I get help with organising travel to meetings?

For all meetings, we will give members information about how to travel to the venue by car, bus, or train.



We will book venues that are easy to get to by public transport.

We will book venues that have on-site parking (where possible).



If you are finding it difficult to organise travel to a meeting, it might be helpful to get support from someone you know.



This could be a family member, friend, or a support person you work with.



If you don't have anyone who can help you, please let Inclusion North know and we will support where possible.

How do I apply to be a member of the board?



Please fill in this easy read form

Your name

Address

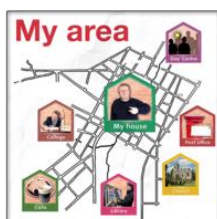
Phone

There is an application form to fill in.

On this form we ask for information, like:



- Your name.



- The area you would like to represent.



- Which board you are interested in (learning disability or autism).



- What your support needs are.



- Why you would like to be a member of the board.

- Why you think you would be a good member of the board.



How are members chosen?

If there are lots of applications from one area, Inclusion North will need to decide who will be offered a member place on the board.



It might not be possible to offer a place to everyone who applies.

We will use the information in the application forms to help us make this decision.

Important things that will help us to make this decision are:



Making sure we have people from **different organisations** representing each area.

Making sure we are offering places to **people from minority communities** whose voices aren't often heard.



We will contact everyone who applies to let them know if they have been offered a place and explain what happens next.

What if more people in my area want to be a member but there are already two people from that area?



We only have spaces for two people from each local authority area to be a member.

Some of the places are already filled.

We will offer extra spaces to people who often do not have their voices heard.



This includes



- Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.
- People from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning LGBTQ+ community.
- People in long-stay hospitals.



If the spaces are full, we can keep your name on a waiting list (if you give consent).

If a space becomes available for a new board member, we will contact you.



Inclusion North – who are we and why are we involved?



Inclusion North works to make sure that people with a learning disability and autistic people are included, valued, and listened to.



We work with experts by experience across lots of different projects, to co-produce work and make positive changes.



Inclusion North works across the North East, North Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Humberside.



The Integrated Care Board have asked Inclusion North to set up and run the Citizenship Boards.



You can find out more about Inclusion North and the work we do, by visiting our website:

www.inclusionnorth.org



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