



**inclusion
north**

Autism and learning disability citizenship boards:

Frequently asked questions



InclusionNorth

What are the Citizenship Boards?

The Citizenship Boards have been set up 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 to influence decisions made about health and care across the North East and North Cumbria.

There are two Citizenship Boards – a Learning Disability Board and an Autism Board.

The members of the boards are all experts by experience and self-advocates.

Who can be a member?

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

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 LGBTQIA+ community, and people in long-stay hospitals.

How are the boards run?

The boards are co-chaired 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 venues across the North East and North Cumbria. This makes it more fair for people travelling long distances to the meetings.

The things we talk about in each board meeting, and the actions we take, are decided by group 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. It also means you have to think about how we can make health and care better for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

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
- Join in discussions about health and care
- Listen to other people's experiences and views
- Make suggestions and share ideas and opinions

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

To be a member of the board, it is helpful to come to as many meetings as you can.

In meetings, board members join in discussions about health and care services. This might include:

- Sharing personal experiences of health and care services (optional)
- 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 to make sure as many people as possible get the chance to be involved. If you have a learning disability and are also autistic, you need to choose which board you want to be part of.

The two boards will share information, and there will be one meeting per year where 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 local authority area. If you have close links with more than one area, you need to choose which one you would like to represent.

The local authority areas we need members from are:

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

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 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?

Yes – members can claim involvement fees for your time at the meeting.

Involvement fees are £75 per half 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?

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 and have on-site parking (where possible).

We will make an accessible travel guide for each meeting.

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?

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)
- 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 LGBTQIA+ community, and 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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