

It is a real honour to take on this role and I am very excited for the journey ahead. It is my intention to build on the excellent work undertaken by my predecessor Wendy Thomas. My thanks to Wendy for all her dedication and commitment in transforming the National Autism Team into the National Neurodivergence Team. Wendy leaves behind a strong legacy of workforce support and training, e-learning, resources and the award winning 'birthday party' video.

I had the pleasure of working with Wendy for many years in a variety of roles I have undertaken. I come to the Head of Service role having spent the past two and a half years in Welsh Government as Programme Manager for the Neurodivergence Improvement Programme. Prior to this, I established Gwent Integrated Autism Service in 2017 which I then managed for five years. My professional background is social work, and I managed Blaenau Gwent Community Learning Disability for 10 years having spent time in the team as a social worker and adult safeguarding manager.

I am looking forward to continuing to work with many of you who I have established relationships with and to forging new partnerships to achieve our vision. We have come so far in Wales, but there is more to do. I see the National Neurodivergence Team as a national enabler, we will continue to support the health, social care, education and wider workforce, we will continue to coproduce resources, we will raise awareness, understanding and acceptance of neurodivergence. Our principles are based on the social model of disability, we will promote neuro-inclusion across society, we will provide advice, information and support to develop neuro-affirming services, environments, work-places and communities.

To achieve this, we must all work differently, we must all work together as one system with a common goal to progress towards a Wales where neurodivergent people thrive. We must model that at a strategic level, and the National Neurodivergence Team will continue to collaborate with Welsh Government and NHS Wales Performance and Improvement to drive forward transformation.

We will continue to listen to neurodivergent people and what matters to you. We will support Regional Partnership Boards to develop neurodivergent strategic groups. We will continue to drive improvements in the Integrated Autism Service. We will explore what more we can do to provide information, advice and support to children, young people, their families and children's neurodevelopmental services. We will take advantage of the newly published report from NHS England ADHD Taskforce to identify learning and opportunities that are relevant to us in Wales.

There is a huge energy in Wales for change and I look forward to us all working together to improve outcomes for the neurodivergent population.