

Title of Report:	Autism Strategy Report
Report to be considered by:	The Health and Wellbeing Board
Date of Meeting:	28 November 2013

Purpose of Report: To update the Board on progress with the Autism Strategy

Recommended Action: For the Board to note progress against the Autism Strategy 2010.

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The DH Autism Strategy 2010 and statutory guidance on supporting the needs of adults with autism 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' 2010 sets out the requirements for local authorities and local health bodies.

- (1) Awareness raising and understanding.
- (2) Diagnostic pathway - clear and consistent.
- (3) Improving access to services.
- (4) Improving access to employment.
- (5) Involvement in service planning.

1.2 A recent national self assessment, October 2013 confirmed the limited success achieved against the Strategy's key objectives.

1.3 From WBC adult social care perspective it is evident that it supports a minority of adults with autism living in West Berkshire - those at one end of the spectrum with communication difficulties and challenging behaviour. The Council's eligibility criteria restricts the numbers it can support, its financial resources restrict further service developments and the small number it supports negates the development of an autism team

1.4 The NH has invested further in the diagnostic pathway but there are few services available post diagnosis.

1.6 Key service deficits exist; support into and to maintain employment, public awareness raising, social and community support networks and services for both children in transitions and adults, single point of access for information and advice

2. Proposals

The Autism Partnership Board will continue to meet with the new Head of Adult Service chairing. NHS representation will be pursued. Parent carers and the local and regional National Autism Society bring both expertise and innovation to the Board as it looks to progress the strategy's objectives within current resources.

3. Recommendations

For the Board to note the constraints and the progress of WBC and its partners with regard the Autism Strategy.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Autism is a lifelong development disorder that affects the way that a person communicates with and relates to others and make sense of the world around them. It affects 1 in 100 of the UK population - approximately 1400 in West Berkshire with diagnosed and undiagnosed autism.
- 1.2 Because it is a spectrum of difficulties it presents differently:- at the severe end of the spectrum there can be no or little speech with challenging behaviour and an insistence on routine and sameness. These individuals need a lifetime of specialist support. At the other end the individual may have a very high IQ with a university degree but not necessarily be able to function normally in society without some support. They may also have mental health problems. However autism is not a learning disability or a mental health condition.

2. Background

- 2.1 In April 2009 the National Autistic Society (NAS), West Berkshire Branch conducted a survey of its members with regard the provision of local services. Their key findings included the need for:-
- (1) Strategic planning to meet the needs of people with autism
 - (2) A specialist adult autism team.
 - (3) Youth services and support for young people with autism making the transition to adult services.
 - (4) Effective staff training so staff are aware of the issues those with autism present and how to work success fully with them.
 - (5) Information and support for families including short breaks.
 - (6) Families and people with autism involved in strategic planning and service development.
- 2.2 In February 2010, West Berkshire reviewed its service provision across adults and children's services.
- 2.3 This review confirmed the existence of a range of services to support adults with autism and their families, but that significant gaps did exist, similar to those raised by the NAS West Berkshire.
- 2.4 In April 2010, the Department of Health launched its Autism Strategy, identifying 5 key areas:-
- (1) Awareness raising and understanding.
 - (2) Diagnostic pathway - clear and consistent.
 - (3) Improving access to services.

- (4) Improving access to employment.
- (5) Involvement in service planning.

2.5 West Berkshire Council's response to the Autism Strategy 2010 has been:-

- (1) Strategic Leadership
 - (a) Autism Partnership Board established, chaired by Adult Social Care Head of Service. Purpose to provide strategic leadership and user and family engagement in the planning and developing of services.
 - (b) Membership includes adult with autism, parent carer, NHS provider and commissioner, WBC Children's and Adult Social Care and voluntary sector representation from NAS and NAS West Berkshire and Job Centre Plus. There has been virtually no attendance by NHS commissioners or providers.
- (2) A joint JSNA for Autism for West of Berkshire providing a needs analysis for the local population was issued in 2011 by the PCT and local councils and is currently being updated by WBC.
- (3) The Board has reviewed local employment opportunities, staff training, awareness raising and the NHS diagnostic pathway. Consequently Autism Awareness training is now part of the ASC Training Programme, an awareness session and Autism Alert Card launch was successfully held in June 2012, the transition process between Children and Young People is to be progressed as a project within the ASC Programme Board for completion by March 2014. The NHS established in 2011/12 a new service for diagnosis and also clinical supervision and training within their psychological therapy services. This has increased the numbers of adults with a diagnosis and accessing short term therapies but there are very limited services providing ongoing support.
- (4) Job Centre Plus has appointed Disability Employment Advisors to provide mentoring and coaching and to support those with disability including autism, to look for and maintain employment. They have also run staff awareness training courses and a work psychologist provides support to the disability employment advisors. A number of other initiatives exist to support those on job seekers allowance attend a work programme, work experience and mentoring. Local feedback confirms adults with autism of all ages, still experience significant problems in accessing employment.
- (5) Any adult with a diagnosis of autism is eligible for a Community Care Assessment (NHS and Community Care Act 1990). However, West Berkshire Council's eligibility criteria of critical results in very few being eligible for social care services - usually the more complex with either learning disability or mental health issues. Others not eligible are offered advice and information on other community services. Adults with autism are recorded separately and the Council supports approximately 70 individuals who are eligible for social care services.

- (6) The Council also has a duty of care to protect those who whilst not eligible for social care require time limited interventions due to their dysfunctional or chaotic lifestyles. Adults with autism are often vulnerable due to their poor communication and social skills. The Council has a Safeguarding responsibility and where there is evidence of abuse the Council will enact its Safeguarding procedures.

3. Service developments

The review of services conducted in 2010 and subsequent discussions with parents have highlighted the need for the following services;

- (1) Improved Transition Planning for those eligible for adult social care services -Adult Social Care has established a project within the Adult Social Care Efficiency Programme to review transitions from Childrens to Adult services to be completed by March 2014. A specialist transitions social worker has also been appointed.
- (2) Information services - The Adult Social Care has established Access For All, an Information, Advice and Signposting service. Feedback from those who have been provided with this service has been very positive, (In Touch review) though the service did not distinguish the service user groups in this review.
- (3) A specialist team or worker with knowledge of Autism - Currently all of the Learning Disability Team work with those eligible for social care services as over 60 have a diagnosis of Autism and could not be supported by one practitioner. There is however scope for a lead practitioner to be identified to keep abreast of policy and practise to ensure the whole team is kept up to date and develops their expertise.
- (4) Social groups and day activities - many fall outside the adult social care criteria. The local branch of the National Autistic Society runs events and regular activities and there may be opportunity for further community development.

Currently Adult Social Care is reviewing how and what it commissions with the voluntary sector and is consulting on the following outcomes which should extend and diversify current provision;

- (a) Helping vulnerable adults to have a voice
- (b) Supporting vulnerable adults to access employment
- (c) Preventing social isolation
- (d) Helping people to continue caring
- (e) Supporting vulnerable people to live independently
- (f) Supporting vulnerable people to manage their long term conditions.

However, the total budget for all adult social care is £1m for a range of activities across a wide range of needs and disabilities.

- (5) Coaching and mentoring to support into and maintain employment – adult social care does not provide support into employment. Voluntary services could develop local services as per (5)
- (6) (Support or 'buddying' to enable access to services, by providing 1:1 to navigate through public services; health, benefits, housing, employment. .Voluntary sector services could develop local community provision to address this deficit. (5)

Items 4-6 are for those who fall outside of the Council's Adult Social Care threshold for services. For Adult Social Care to fund such services, it would mean diverting funding away from those who have critical needs. Voluntary Sector organisations are best placed to establish such services but they generally look to the Council for funding.

4. The National Autistic Society, West Berkshire Branch

This voluntary sector organisation has been active locally for many years, striving to improve services and raise the profile and awareness of the issues that face individuals with Autism. They have recently written to the Council and CCG expressing their concerns at the lack of progress with regard to the implementation of the Autism Strategy.

5. Summary

- 5.1 The Council has responded with its partners to the Autism Strategy and to local voluntary sector organisations keen to address the needs of those with autism. The Partnership Board is currently reviewing its action plan and how it can progress such key issues as access to information, social networks, transition planning and support services post diagnosis. The presence of the local and regional NAS brings expertise and knowledge but any service developments require funding.
- 5.2 West Berkshire Adult Social Care Services with its critical eligibility criteria only support those at one end of the ASD spectrum requiring specialist support - approximately 67 of the 420 the service supports in the Learning Disability and Mental Health teams, of a potential 1400 in the district with autism. Statistically and of far greater importance is the requirement to develop employment opportunities, support into and to retain work, an activity that we would expect to be led by the Job Centre.
- 5.3 The NHS diagnostic pathway has been established but has limited numbers and once diagnosed the NHS provides no ongoing services. For many adults the diagnosis is positive in that it confirms a condition and provides explanation for previously experienced difficulties, particularly in social relationships. It enables further information to be sought including strategies to modify behaviour and understand the condition.

- 5.4 In an environment of diminishing resources, it is uncertain how much further the aspirations and expectations of the Autism Strategy can be progressed.

Appendices

There are no Appendices to this report.