

SUNDERLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

20 March 2015

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AUTISM SELF-ASSESSMENT

Report of the Integrated Commissioning Team

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Health and Wellbeing Board of the process followed in completing the Department of Health Autism Self-assessment and to share the key messages from the self-assessment exercise for discussion at the March meeting of the Board.
- 1.2 The report will also provide an overview of work that is planned for 2015 in relation to meeting the requirements of the National Autism Strategy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 2010, the National Autism Strategy, *'Fulfilling and rewarding lives: a strategy for adults with autism in England'* was published by the Department of Health. The strategy sets out a number of key actions and recommendations for local authorities and their partners.
- 2.2 In Sunderland, a multi-agency Local Autism Working Group (LAWG) was set up in 2010 to support the implementation of the strategy recommendations. The membership of the group includes representatives from Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group, Jobcentre Plus, Northumbria Probation Service, the voluntary and community sector and a parent carer.
- 2.3 The National Autism Strategy was reviewed in 2013/14 and a refreshed strategy, *'Think Autism'* was published in April 2014.
- 2.4 An annual self-assessment exercise is carried out which requires Local Authorities to report their progress on fulfilling the recommendations of the strategy to the Department of Health. The self-assessment returns are made publicly available online.

3. COMPLETION OF THE AUTISM SELF-ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 Each question within the self-assessment was sent to key representatives from the Local Autism Working Group for an initial response. Responses were collated by the LA Strategic Commissioning Team and a meeting of the LAWG was held on 11th February 2015 to discuss and agree the ratings.

- 3.2 The self-assessment was signed off by the Adult Social Care Partnership Board and was submitted to the Department of Health on 9th March 2015.

4. SUMMARY OF THE AUTISM SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR SUNDERLAND

Below is a summary of the main points highlighted by the self-assessment exercise.

4.1 Planning

- 4.1.1 Data is currently collected by health and social care services but there needs to be improvements in the level of data sharing between agencies. Some data on the number of people in Sunderland who have autism is to be included in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment profile about supporting people to live independently, but the LAWG will consider whether a JSNA profile specifically about autism is needed that would be produced in partnership with people with autism and their families. The Lifespan approach (0-25 years) recently adopted by the local authority will ensure that young people with autism have a smooth transition to adult services. Data from the service will also inform planning of adult services. *Think Autism* provides some guidance on how local authorities can gather data on the number of people with autism and this will be considered by the new Sunderland Autism Partnership Board (SAPB) which will replace the Local Autism Working group in April 2015 (see section 5.1).
- 4.1.2 The LAWG rated Sunderland 'red' for engagement with people with autism. Whilst one parent carer has been part of the LAWG since its formation in 2010, there have been no representatives with autism on the group. A lot of work has been carried out recently to develop a mechanism for meaningful engagement with the autistic community. Four people with autism and two carers will have a place on the new Sunderland Autism Partnership Board. An engagement network will be developed which will allow people with autism and their families to be kept informed of the work of the SAPB and to feed in their comments and views (see section 5.2). The engagement network will facilitate engagement with a diverse range of people including women, people from BME communities and older people. There will also be a public engagement event held in March 2015 which will allow the autistic community to help to identify priorities for the SAPB for 2015-16 (see section 5.3).
- 4.1.3 The self-assessment exercise highlighted a need for the SAPB to better understand whether public services in Sunderland are making reasonable adjustments to allow people with autism to access general services and services such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy that can be accessed by people following diagnosis.
- ##### **4.2 Training**
- 4.2.1 Whilst training is given to staff working directly with people with autism in statutory services in Sunderland, the approach to training is uncoordinated.

There is no multi-agency training plan in place and training tends to be accessed on an ad hoc basis.

- 4.2.2 Autism Awareness Training is not accessed by criminal justice system staff in all areas of the system. Probation service staff have received training recently.

4.3 Diagnosis

- 4.3.1 A specialist autism diagnostic service is in place which meets almost all of the NICE guidelines. The current waiting time is 24 weeks which is longer than the NICE guideline of 12 weeks, however, due to the addition of extra resource to the service, it is expected that waiting times will be back within the 12 week limit by April 2015.

In the last year, no one was referred outside of the city for a diagnosis. 21 people from Sunderland received a diagnosis and a follow-up support session where they were informed that they could have a Community Care Assessment and were referred to other services as appropriate.

4.4 Care and Support

- 4.4.1 Adults with autism can access social care via the Customer Services Network. There is a recognised pathway for people with autism but without a learning disability and these people are supported by the mental health team within the Personalisation Service.
- 4.4.2 The local authority commissions an independent advocacy service which is inclusive of people with autism and advocates receive autism awareness training on an ad hoc basis.
- 4.4.3 There is some information and support available for people who do not meet eligibility criteria for social care via the Sunderland Care and Support Solutions Team which also produces a Directory of Services.

4.5 Housing

- 4.5.1 The needs of people with autism are not included in the Housing Strategy but the housing needs of people with autism are included in the Enabling Independence Strategy, which is due to be reviewed this year.

4.6 Employment

- 4.6.1 Any employment actions have been taken forward by the LD Partnership Board Employment Sub-group which has recently broadened its remit to include autism. Representatives from the Employment Sub-group attended a Work Discovery event where they had a stall with colleagues from Project Choice, Autism in Mind and Autism Works. The aim of the event was to raise awareness of employing people with learning disabilities and autism and to have direct engagement with employers.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 Sunderland Autism Partnership Board (SAPB)

- 5.1.1 At a meeting in February 2014, the LAWG agreed that a review of the group was needed to ensure that the right representatives were included in the membership, reporting structures were robust and real priorities for the autistic community were used to inform the action plan.
- 5.1.2 Following this meeting work was carried out to determine the most appropriate structure, membership and governance arrangements for the group and it was agreed that the LAWG would be replaced by a partnership board, the Sunderland Autism Partnership Board (SAPB) that would report into the Adult Social Care Partnership Board three times a year. The Board will be chaired by the Head of Integrated Commissioning and will include in its membership one elected member, four people with autism and two carers, along with key representatives from health, social care, education, employment and criminal justice system services. Other representatives will be co-opted onto the group depending on the action plan and identified priorities.

5.2 Autism Engagement Network

- 5.2.1 Alongside the Sunderland Autism Partnership Board will sit the Autism Engagement Network. This will be a virtual network of individuals and organisations which have a particular interest in autism. The network will be facilitated by Autism in Mind, which is a user-led support group with a large network, as well as other VCS organisations such as Sunderland Carers' Centre; the Sunderland, Washington and Coalfields Parent Carer Council and Sunderland People First. The role of the engagement network will be to facilitate two-way communication between the autistic community and the SAPB.

5.3 Autism Consultation Event

- 5.3.1 A half-day consultation event took place on the morning of Wednesday 4th March at the Sunderland Bangladeshi Community Centre. The event was very well attended by various stakeholders including people with autism and their families.
- 5.3.2 The purpose of the event was to seek the views of members of the autistic community on what they think should be the priorities for the SAPB in 2015-16 and how the priorities can be taken forward.
- 5.3.3 The identified priorities will be used to inform the action plan of the SAPB and regular updates will be shared with the attendees of the event, who will be invited to join the engagement network.
- 5.3.4 Initial feedback from the event was very positive. Collation of the final feedback will be completed within the next two weeks.

5.4 The Autism Capital Grant

- 5.4.1 In February 2015, every local authority received £18,500 capital funding to be used to make environments used by people with autism, such as public buildings, more autism friendly or to assist people with autism through the purchase of new equipment or IT.
- 5.4.2 In Sunderland, the Local Autism Working Group were asked to put forward ideas for how the grant could be spent. Two complementary projects were chosen and the funding will be used to improve the environment in the Sunderland Care and Support Community Resource Centres to make the centres more autism-friendly for people who use the day services. In addition, one room in Fulwell Community Resource Centre will be redecorated and made into an autism-friendly meeting place for Autism in Mind who will use the room to meet regularly for peer support training, self-awareness raising and socialising. A computer will also be available to enable people to seek employment or training.
- 5.4.3 Autism in Mind are looking at how they can expand the support they offer to people with autism including engaging with key organisations who can provide advice, information and guidance about employment and welfare benefits. The group will also liaise with the wider autistic community to seek views on the autism action plan going forward.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Board is recommended to receive the report for information.
- 6.2 The Board is recommended to receive further progress reports as the Sunderland Autism Partnership Board becomes established.

