

**NATIONAL AUTISM STRATEGY: LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION**

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND ADULT SERVICES**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Members, the local response to the implementation of the National Autism Strategy.
- 1.2 The Autism Act 2009 committed the Government to publishing an adult autism strategy, "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives", to transform services for adults with autism.
- 1.3 The Autism Strategy, "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives" is in place and due to be comprehensively reviewed in 2013.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The first ever strategy for improving the lives of adults with autism in England was published on 3 March 2010.
- 2.2 The strategy sets out a number of key actions and recommendations for central Government as well as for local authorities, the NHS and Jobcentre Plus, focusing on five key areas:
  - Increasing awareness and understanding of autism
  - Developing a clear and consistent pathway for diagnosis
  - Improving access to the services and support people need to live independently within the community
  - Employment
  - Enabling local partners to develop relevant services to meet identified needs and priorities

**3.0 KEY POINTS OF THE DOCUMENT**

**3.1 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives'**

- 3.2 Autism is a lifelong developmental disability and although some people can live relatively independently, others will have high dependency needs requiring a lifetime of specialist care. There are approximately 400,000 adults with Autistic Spectrum Conditions in England, around half of whom have a learning disability.

- 3.3 Too many adults with autism are dependent on benefits for their income and on the care and support of their families, not only for housing but simply to cope with their everyday lives. For those without this support, the outlook is worse: the risk of severe health and mental health problems, homelessness, and descent into crime or addiction. The costs in financial terms to public services are enormous: the costs in emotional terms for both adults with autism and their families more devastating still.
- 3.4 The Government's vision is that 'All adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.'
- 3.5 The Autism strategy sets a clear framework for all mainstream services across the public sector to work together for adults with autism and is underpinned by the fundamental principles of equality and human rights.
- 3.6 The publication of the first national autism strategy for England is a significant and important step to delivering that vision for adults with autism.
- 3.7 For adults with autism, this means:
- Having a right to receive an assessment of need from social services
  - Getting the same opportunities for education and further education as everyone else
  - Being supported to get a job and stay in work
  - Being able to choose where to live – just like anyone else
  - Having relationships and social networks
  - Having their health needs properly met in a way which is appropriate for someone with autism
  - Being safe from hate crime and discrimination
  - Living in a society where people understand, respect and accommodate difference
  - Receiving support to live independently

## **4.0 FIRST YEAR DELIVERY PLAN**

4.1 The government produced the first year delivery plan on 2 April 2010, 'Towards 'Fulfilling and rewarding lives': The first year delivery plan for adults with autism in England. This sets out the governance structure and the actions, with timescales and responsibilities that will be taken in the first year to support the implementation of the Autism Strategy.

4.2 The guidance sends a clear message that local authorities and the NHS must:

- Provide autism awareness training for all staff
- Provide specialist autism training for key staff, such as GPs and community care assessors
- Ensure community care assessments for adults with autism are not based solely on IQ and therefore cannot refuse to undertake an assessment
- Appoint an autism lead in their area
- Have to develop a clear pathway to diagnosis and assessment for adults with autism
- Commission services based on adequate population data

## **5.0 CURRENT POSITION**

5.1 In Sunderland work has been undertaken over the last few years to support adults with autism including:

5.2 Meadow Rise, a registered residential care home for adults with learning disabilities, supporting transitional arrangements

5.3 Supporting transition and independence for example:

- People have been supported to move on from residential services and are now supported in their own homes within the community by independent care and support providers
- Wrap around care teams are now supporting community care packages enabling people to remain within the family home, prevention of admission into care and minimising anxiety levels for parents
- The transition of young people (14yrs-25yrs) has a person-centred planning focus to effectively support the provision of a transition pathway for individuals that includes: Employment, Health,

Friendships, Higher Education and Relationships. Lots of progress has been made despite the service being in its infancy

## **6.0 PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

- 6.1 Sunderland City Council responded to the DoH Consultation document and recognises there is a need to further develop and align services to effectively meet the needs of adults with autism and their carers.
- 6.2 A partnership approach will need to be fully utilised if Sunderland is to successfully achieve identified outcomes and key priorities within the Autism strategy.
- 6.3 In the North East, Wendy Balmain, Deputy Regional Director in the Department of Health, is utilising the existing structure and reporting mechanisms within the North East Autism Consortium (NEAC) as the vehicle to support both local and regional planning. Plans for involving individuals and their families in developing these plans are being prepared by the Autism Strategy Development Groups.
- 6.4 The autism strategy development group (ASDG) provides an opportunity for commissioners from both Health and Social Care across South of Tyne & Wear to provide information to those people with a role in implementing the strategy. There is representation on the ASDG from Sunderland City Council's, Health, Housing and Adult Services (HHAS), Commissioning Team.
- 6.5 There is sporadic and poor attendance at the ASDG group from other LA areas although there has been an indication that this will change. The ASDG has recently extended its membership to include parents/carers and adults with autism. Key priorities for action have been identified, in particular the production of local action plans.
- 6.6 The North East Autism Consortium (NEAC) includes cross-sector representation (including partners from PCT and the Voluntary and Community Sector) and is a forum for the sharing of information and good practice. The HHAS Strategic Commissioner provides representation at this group.

## **7.0 WHAT IS CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN SUNDERLAND**

- 7.1 A Local Autism Working Group has now been set up, with the involvement of carers and social care providers in the independent and voluntary sectors, to develop a local action plan that will support the implementation of the Autism Strategy - Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives and enable local partners to develop relevant services to meet identified needs and priorities.

- 7.2 The group will be focusing on local priorities to meet key strategy themes and have prioritised the following areas:
- Increasing awareness and understanding of autism
  - Developing a clear consistent pathway for diagnosis of autism
  - Improving access for adults with autism to the services and support they need to live independently within the community
- 7.3 Sunderland City Council has now created an Autism training plan (still in draft format) and will be exploring how to effectively implement the delivery of the training, including the identification of priority groups and appropriate levels of training (e.g. awareness raising for all front line staff and specialist training for staff working on a 1:1 basis with people with autism).
- 7.4 Sunderland City Council is now in the process of identifying local needs through a formal structured needs assessment that will provide a better understanding of adult social care needs and preferences in terms of improving daily living.
- 7.5 An internal steering group will be over-seeing and supporting the consultation process that will involve workshops and face to face contact with both professionals (Health, Local Authority and Voluntary and Community Sector) and individuals in order to accurately identify gaps. The group will be sharing information with the NEAC and ASDG to inform regional action plans.
- 7.6 The approach to the needs assessment will be structured around the needs of individuals from the 7 outcomes for adult social care. The internal working group has recognised this is an intensive area of work and has agreed to consult on the following three areas initially:
- Improving Health and Well-Being
  - Improving Quality of life, incorporating accommodation solutions
  - Making a positive contribution
- 7.7 The initial needs assessment is anticipated to be completed by August 2011.
- 7.8 The steering group will be meeting on a 6-week basis and will be providing reports/results of analysis to internal senior management teams and the local autism working group to support the development and effective implementation of the local action plan.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to receive this report as an initial briefing and agree to receive further updates in six to nine months.

### **Background Papers**

Autism Strategy Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives