

Meeting of the Cabinet – 14th September 2011

Report of the Director of Adult, Community And Housing Services

A Strategy for Services for Adults with Autism in Dudley

Purpose Of Report

1. To seek approval from Cabinet for the new Strategy for Services for people with autism in Dudley.
2. Following extensive consultation, the Strategy has been approved by the Dudley Autism Partnership. The Strategy will also be presented for approval to the Board of the Clinical Commissioning Consortium.

Background

3. The Dudley Autism Strategy sets out a vision and direction for the development of services over the period 2011 to 2014.
4. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with people who use services, users, carers, the agencies which are represented on the Autism Partnership and the Directorate of Children's Services.
5. Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) - formerly known as Autistic Spectrum Disorder - is a life long, developmental disability, affecting social interaction and communication.
6. People who have ASC can also have learning and/or physical disabilities. This strategy focuses on the more able end of the autistic continuum – people who are said to have 'high functioning autism'.
7. It is estimated that there could be as many as 2400 adults across the autistic spectrum in Dudley Borough.
8. In June 2002 the Council set up the DART (Dudley Autistic Resource Team) Project. The aims of the DART Project were to raise public and professional awareness of autism, promote independence, and assist people in achieving life choices and gaining social inclusion
9. The project established a once a week Drop In Service on Tuesday mornings and a parent support group TOADS (Triumph Over Autism Dudley Support).
10. In summer 2006 the multi-disciplinary Autism Partnership was set up and was tasked with developing a Strategy for the Borough. The first autism strategy for Dudley was approved by Cabinet in June 2007.

11. As a result of the strategy, DACHS working with the PCT established the Autism Spectrum Condition Team within learning disability services. This specialist team comprising two social workers has greatly improved arrangements for assessment, public information and work with complex cases involving people with autism.

12. The Autism Act 2009 was the first ever piece of legislation designed to address the needs of one specific impairment group – adults with autism.

13. In March 2010, the Government published a national strategy for people with autism – "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives", followed by a first year delivery plan in April 2010. The strategy which has been embraced by the Coalition government since it took office in May 2010 sets out a long-term vision and ambition to improve the lives of adults with autism.

14. 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.'

15. The Government also identified specific areas for action over the next three years. These are:

- Increasing awareness and understanding of autism among frontline professionals
- developing a clear, consistent pathway for diagnosis in every area, which is followed by the offer of a personalised needs assessment
- improving access for adults with autism to the services and support they need to live independently within the community
- helping adults with autism into work, and
- enabling local partners to plan and develop appropriate services for adults with autism to meet identified needs and priorities.

16. In the autumn of 2010 the government carried out extensive consultation on implementation of the strategy. As part of the consultation process, two meetings were held in Dudley with people with autism who use services and their carers and a formal response submitted to the Department of Health.

17. In April 2011, the Coalition Government published a framework to evaluate progress with implementing the national strategy. This framework is based on visible and measurable quality outcomes, which have been developed with ADASS and the National Autistic Society. These outcomes reflect the priorities and principles set out in the government's "Vision for Adult Social Care", in particular promoting personalisation and ensuring a positive experience of care and support.

18. The main aims of the new Dudley Autism Strategy reflect the seven outcomes as follows:

- Adults with autism achieve better health outcomes
- Adults with autism are included and economic reactive.
- Adults with autism are living in accommodation that meets their needs.
- Adults with autism are benefiting from the personalisation agenda in health and social care, and can access personal budgets.
- Adults with autism are no longer managed inappropriately in the criminal justice system.
- Adults with autism, their families and carers are satisfied with local services.
- Adults with autism are involved in service planning

19. An important issue from the consultation process for many people with autism and their families is to know that key systems are in place in their local area to identify and respond to the needs of people with autism. To reflect these concerns, the Strategy also sets out three key ambitions, to enable local people in Dudley to assess how services are moving towards achieving the seven outcomes:

- The Council and its partners know how many adults with autism live in the area.
- A clear and trusted diagnostic pathway is available locally.
- Health and social care staff make reasonable adjustments to services to meet the needs of adults with autism.

20. The Strategy will be implemented through the work of the Autism Partnership, with robust performance management against each of the key objectives.

21. The Strategy is a strategy for adults with autism, but a Children's Services manager has been involved in the Partnership to ensure a co-ordinated focus on transition to adulthood.

Finance

22. The Strategy does not require any additional investment by the Council; it will be financed through existing budgets for Adult Social Care.

Law

23. The Council has powers and duties to support persons with autism under its welfare function contained in a number of statutes including the National Assistance Act 1948, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the

Mental Health Acts and may do anything incidental to conducive to or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Equality Impact

24. An equality impact assessment has been completed.

Recommendation

25. Cabinet is asked to approve the Strategy for services for autism.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Pope-Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrea Pope-Smith
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