

**Meeting of the Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

**Report of the Director of Adult, Community And Housing Services**

**A Strategy for Services for Adults With Autism And Asperger's Syndrome In Dudley**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To seek approval from Cabinet for the draft Strategy for Services for people with autism and Asperger's syndrome in Dudley.
2. Following a period of consultation, the Strategy has been approved by the Autism Task Group, which is a sub-group of the Learning Disability Partnership Board. The Strategy will also be presented for approval to the Board of the Primary Care Trust.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Dudley Autism Strategy sets out a vision and direction for the development of services over the period 2007 to 2010.
4. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with users, carers, the agencies, which are represented on the Autism Task Group, other agencies and Council Directorates.
5. Autistic Spectrum Condition (formerly known as Autistic Spectrum Disorder or ASD) 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.
7. It is estimated that there could be as many as 2000 adults across the autistic spectrum in Dudley Borough.
8. In June 2002 DMBC Social Services set up the DART (Dudley Autistic Resource Team) Project. The aims of the DART Project are to raise public and professional awareness of autism, promote independence, and assist people in achieving life choices and gaining social inclusion.
9. The work of the Project has focused on six key areas - advocacy for client and carers, a social group to forge friendships and access leisure and recreation, training and employment, supported accommodation, carer support and respite/holidays.

10. The DART Project runs a once a week Drop In Service on Tuesday mornings and a parent support group TOADS (Triumph Over Autism Dudley Support).
11. The project seeks to provide other links in the community including Adult Learning4Life. DART works in partnership with providers of services to develop specific schemes to improve opportunities for ably autistic people and to enhance their quality of life.
12. In summer 2006 the multi-disciplinary Autism Task Group was set up and was tasked with developing a Strategy for the Borough.
13. The latest Department of Health document, 'Better services for people with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder', (Nov.2006)\_clarifies the nature and intent of existing government policy as it relates to adults with an Autistic Spectrum Condition. It is intended to encourage people in the social care and health field to develop local agendas for action.
14. The DH document states:
  - The current position whereby some people with an ASD 'fall through' local services – in particular between mental health and learning disability services, is unacceptable and contrary to the intention of government policy
  - Proper individual assessments, based on eligibility criteria as set down in 'Fair Access to Care', are the starting point for people getting the services they need. This should be supported by the use of person centred approaches
  - The services required to meet identified needs are best provided by local services that have the right skills and trained staff to provide what an individual requires. This is better than deciding that either mental health, learning disability or physical disability services should provide all ASC related services as a matter of principle.
  - Services and supports should focus on supporting each person's inclusion in society. New approaches to funding and support such as direct payments and individual budgets should be made available to people with ASC in the same way as everyone else
  - This whole approach should be underpinned by effective partnerships, including not only the relevant service sectors but also local representatives of people with an ASC and their families.

### **The main aims of the Dudley Autism Strategy are as follows:**

- To improve the process for diagnosis and assessment for people who have autism or Asperger's.
  - To achieve more clarity about the routes into Services and ensure that specialist support is available when required
  - To increase the range of housing options available to people with autism to enable them to live independently.
  - To provide more opportunities for paid work.
  - To improve access to leisure and recreational facilities
  - To improve services to carers of people with autism
15. The Strategy will be implemented through the work of the Autism Task Group, with robust performance management against each of the key areas.
16. The Strategy is a strategy for adults with autism, but a Children's Services manager has been involved in the Task Group to ensure a co-ordinated focus on transition to adulthood.

### **FINANCE**

17. The Councils' contribution to the Strategy will be resourced through existing and planned investments in DACHS' budget for Adult Social Care. Any additional resource requirements would be built into the Council's medium term financial planning.

### **LAW**

18. The Council have powers and duties to support persons with autism and Asperger's syndrome 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**

19. The content of this report is consistent with the Equality and Diversity policy of the Council.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

20. Cabinet is asked to approve the draft Strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'L'.

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