



APPENDIX A

The Somerset Autism Strategy
Annual Report
Covering the work of the four sub groups

March 2017

LIVING WITH AUTISM

How are we doing?

Priority: Improve the health and wellbeing of people with autism including their carers and family.

- Developed by Somerset County Council (SCC), the Somerset Autism Collections are specialist collections of books that have been placed in local libraries around Somerset and loaned to organisations that support people with autism and their carers and families. Focusing on a range of topics that relate to living with autism, the primary focus is to improve the wellbeing of people with autism and their carers and families, through increasing awareness and understanding of what autism is, how it affects people's lives and strategies and techniques to live well with autism. This includes aspects of life such as emotional wellbeing and stress management, social relationships, sex education, being a parent etc;
- The collections have been recognised nationally by both the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce, as well as the Association of Senior Children's and Education Libraries. Please see www.gov.uk/government/collections/libraries-shaping-the-future-report-and-case-studies

Priority: Improve the support available for carers of people with autism and increase the resilience of those caring for someone with autism.

- During 2016 a review of Carers Services' was undertaken in order to inform a new and improved Carers' Service for Somerset, commissioned by SCC and NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This has resulted in a re-commissioning exercise with the new service launching in September 2017. The mental health carers service and young carers service are not part of this, however the links between these services will be improved during 2017 through the development of working agreements.
- The new Somerset's Commitment to Carers was launched in February 2016 which outlines the priorities in Somerset for supporting carers and former carers, as well as including an action plan to improve local services. There are now 23 organisations who have confirmed their endorsement of the Commitment and of these, 18 have completed action plans;

- Carers' Voice has strengthened its presence in Somerset as an influencing body concerned with improving the lives of unpaid carers in Somerset. There are currently 37 potential Vision Group Leaders, some of whom are already established.

Priority: Improve the way we consult and involve people with autism, their carers and families.

The involvement of people with autism has taken many forms since the creation of the Somerset Autism Strategy:

- Consultation work was undertaken to inform the Autism Strategy <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/strategies/somerset-autism-strategy/>
- The launch event of the strategy and Somerset Autism Collections involved people with autism and featured individuals sharing their own personal experiences of living with autism on BBC Somerset <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0373x0d>
- The Autism Strategy Group and sub-groups include representation from people with autism and their carers and families;
- People who access services, parent carers and carers of adults have been involved in the procurement for the Learning Disabilities (LD) provider service including all service specifications - <http://somersetldchange.co.uk/>
- People with autism and their carers' were fully involved in the assessment visit undertaken during 2016 by the ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) national autism lead advisor and NHS England;
- Development of the Young People's Champion roles and the Unstoppables within Children's Services.

Priority: Work with partners to improve the housing options available for people with autism.

- A housing pathway for people with a LD and autism has been developed and can be found at: www.somerset.gov.uk/council/board52%20Adults/2016%20June%2029/2016%20June%2029%20Item%2011%20Appendix%20A.pdf

- In addition, guidance has been developed which provides social care staff with an overview of the housing options available in Somerset to people with LD, including autism, the support available and further information and resources. Sessions with mental health staff are planned for 2017 which will include raising their awareness of housing options for the people with autism that they support.

Priority: Increase public awareness of autism.

- The Autism Somerset Collections are targeted at people with autism and their families and their presence in libraries is helping to raise awareness in local communities:
 - *“Having more information about Autism and Asperger’s is really important. It will help more people understand the challenges I face in day to day life”* (Individual on the autistic spectrum)
 - *“Great to see a section on autism, especially to raise awareness”* (Library customer)
- SCC and CCG have also worked with BBC Somerset to raise awareness through holding a morning radio show that focused on autism awareness and involved three people with autism giving their accounts of what life with autism is like. The interviews can be heard at: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p001d78n/clips
- Various stakeholders also celebrated Autism Awareness Week in 2016, including SCC and Priorswood Primary School with coverage in the local press.

Priority: Increase public awareness of autism.

In Somerset there are various work-streams and services supporting people with autism in to employment. Recent achievements and progress include:

- Staff within ASPIRE Support for Employment have received training on how autism affects employment and assists individuals with autism to gain employment. This training involved hearing first hand from a young person with autism and their family about their personal experiences. Staff described this as “very positive and powerful”.
- Successful continuation of Project SEARCH, which provides the opportunity for students in their final year of education to

spend the academic year in the workplace with an employer. Participants have included individuals with autism and success rates into employment have exceeded 60% in each of the three years it has been running. Please see link for more information, <https://somersexnewsroom.com/2016/07/21/project-search-hailed-a-success-as-musgrove-interns-achieve-paid-employment/>

- SCC was awarded runner up in the 'Employer of People with Disability' award category at the National Learning Disabilities and Autism Awards for its employment of people with LD.

What next for Living with Autism?

- Take steps to make health checks more accessible to people with autism;
- Engagement of district councils to improve the housing options available for people with autism;
- Further improve the mechanisms by which people with autism are involved in service developments / improvements;
- Ensure that there is provision of social and community activities that are inclusive of people with autism and their carers and families.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

How are we doing?

The sub group meets regularly and progress is being made in defining groups of workers who require training.

The sub group now has an improved mix of attendees, with Children's Learning and Development and Avon & Somerset Police attending regularly as well as the Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

Priority: Further develop the collaboration between children and adults services on training, including transition from children to adult services and independent living.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some progress has been made to improve the mix of members of the Sub Group. However, there are some gaps (e.g. Housing, employers) that need to be addressed. The main improvements have been in engaging representatives of children and younger people; The first cohort of 'Autism Champions' has completed the four-module course. There is now at least one worker in each of Somerset's Adult Social Care areas who has completed the course. A further five workers have one module to complete. 	
<p>Priority: Investigate and secure additional funding (e.g. Clinical Innovation Fund).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few funding opportunities currently – therefore, training will need to be funded by organisations accessing this. 	
<p>Priority: Identify groups and services / adults mapping including parents and GPs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of priority groups have been identified, e.g. school staff and social care workers. The group has also identified police and criminal justice system. Progress made with the police, with training in autism and mental health now being planned. School staff training needs are met through a specialist service. 	
<p>Priority: Develop multi-tier framework – varied training according to professional role and level of involvement with people with autism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Four-module training - course ran during 2016/17 to improve the knowledge and skills of up to 20 workers. Due to staff turnover and sickness issues, only 6 people completed the whole course. However, this does mean that there is now at least one worker in each Adult Social Care area who has attended the whole course. In addition, 5 attendees have completed 75% of the course, therefore each person only needs to complete one module to fully complete this; these workers will be included in the second cohort, as necessary; E-Learning - The Learning Centre now has two courses available to all SCC workers and external providers: 'Autism Awareness' and 'Intermediate knowledge and skills'; 	<p>5 completed 6, 75% complete</p> <p>Accessed 77 times during 2016/17</p>

<p>What next for workforce development?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to expand ‘Introduction to Autism’ to all workers and ‘Dementia Friends’ – style sessions have been agreed in principle; • A second cohort for the four-module course is also on next year’s training programme, to include Children’s Social Care for the first time; • Avon and Somerset Police has agreed in principle to provide autism and mental health training and are working with the Sub Group to achieve this; • Specialist training in autism and Asperger’s Syndrome for Mental Health Social Workers is under discussion and this will be rolled out during 2017/18; • The sub group needs greater input from agencies other than those directly linked to SCC and the focus on training needs to move away from Social Care into the other professions identified in the strategy consultation.
<p>IDENTIFICATION AND DIAGNOSIS</p>
<p>How are we doing?</p>
<p>The identification and diagnosis sub group was previously chaired by Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Unfortunately the chair left the Trust and there have some been difficulties in recruiting a replacement. A new chair person needs to be found to re-instate this sub group and this will be discussed at the next Strategy group this month.</p>
<p>Priority: Improve the way we provide support for those who have had a diagnosis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post diagnostic group in place for adult and provided by the Adult Asperger’s Service, Somerset Partnership; • Access to social care assessment;

Priority: Review the existing pathways to diagnosis

- Clear pathway for adults in place and included within the service specification for the Adult Asperger's Service;
- Mapping workshops took place during 2016 for children and young people. This was in response to the feedback from the ADASS and NHSE visit during the summer 2016, along with concerns about the significant increase in referral rates to the specialist community paediatric & neuro-disability service with a low conversation rate for diagnosis. Guidance for referral criteria for children and young people with possible Autistic Spectrum Conditions developed along with a Protocol.

Priority: Improve signposting to other support services for people who have had a diagnosis

- Public Health at SCC have commissioned work to map current community resources for people with Autism. This work is well underway and will be reported back to the Strategy Group and will inform signposting via professionals and organisational websites including Somerset Choices, Somerset Partnership, Autism Somerset and the National Autistic Society.

Priority: Promote awareness about pathways to diagnosis

- BBC Somerset programme referred to within the Living with Autism section above.
- Somerset Partnership have developed 'Information Sharing and Written sheets' for GPs regarding diagnosis and follow-ups, and added adjustments which will flash up for staff.
- Autism Resource packs developed by the Royal College of General Practitioners. Packs contain information for GPs on how to provide effective consultations with autistic individuals, as well as advice and information for autistic individuals themselves. The packs were developed by the College in conjunction with a range of autism organisations, including the National Autistic Society (NAS).

Priority: Improve the way we share information between organisations about people who have been diagnosed

- As part of this Crisis Care Concordat Group action plan, work is taking place to improve information sharing, including with the Acute hospitals. Steering group in place including the CCG, South West Commissioning Support Unit, SCC, Somerset

Partnership and the Acute Trust, to develop an information-sharing agreement around patients with a LD or Autism. This is to assist with the identification of patients with LD and Autism by the Acute Trusts in order to provide a service according to need and to make the required reasonable adjustments in hospitals. Work to be finalised in the near future and will inform the awareness raising actions.

What next for identification and diagnosis?

- Sub group to reconvene with new chair to review action plan;
- Review of pathways to diagnosis for children and young people to be led by the Designated Medical Officer (DMO) for SEND;
- Report on diagnosis rate from GP registers due end of March 2017 and will inform further planning;
- Further review of capacity and performance within the Adult Asperger's Service.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

How are we doing?

The Children and Young People's sub group is chaired by the Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

In Somerset, there is a lower level of Children recorded as receiving High Needs funding, a Statement or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with autism as the primary need compared to the national statistics.

Somerset has a higher proportion of boys than girls diagnosed with Autism, this is in line with the national picture.

Paediatricians and GP's report pressures from an increase of parental requests for an autism diagnosis for their child, often linked to behavioural difficulties. Parents also report a delay in receiving appointments and a long waiting list for Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) assessments.

The Children's Autism Outreach Team (CAOT) work with families who have children with an Autism diagnosis up until they are 13. The team currently have a waiting list due to demand and this has been compounded by recruitment issues.

Priority: The Autism strategy highlighted there needs to be better information, in one place, about support and services and it must be easily accessible to everyone – people with autism, their carers and families and professionals.

- Somerset Choices has been selected as the portal to provide information for all families within Somerset. The platform is continually being updated to reflect new information and services;
- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) are developing their service for young people including working with the young people's champions for SEND making easy read versions of their information leaflets;
- The Engagement and Participation Team and Somerset Parent Carer Forum have worked on videos and easy read versions to help with access to information including the Core Standards and various strategies;
- A multi-agency group including young people and parent carers has reviewed the EHCP paperwork and pathway guides to ensure it is user friendly including a young person's version.

Priority: The Autism strategy highlighted the need to improve access to diagnostic services and post diagnostic support for children, adults and families through early help, support and advice; offering quality services that are good value for money

- CAOT have successfully recruited new staff and have contacted all families on the waiting list signposting them to organisations that can offer peer support and advice. Families have also been made aware of events held regularly by the team which they can access while on the waiting list;
- SENDIAS have employed a member of staff to focus on support for young requesting an EHCP;
- The Autism library available throughout Somerset has provided information on understanding Autism and ways to self-help.

Priority: The Autism strategy highlighted the need to increase awareness and understanding of autism including training and development for the public, front line services (including Police, Housing etc.), people with autism and their families and carers including schools and educational settings

- The Core Standards have been launched which clearly outline the expectations of support children and young people will receive in education. This includes a task and finish group including parent carers, which has been reviewing and updating the Cygnets programme (now within Support Service for Education) which provides training for parents of children with autism. The course is due to be relaunched shortly in a format which will be easier for a wider range of parents to access.

Priority: Research shows only 15% of people with autism are in full-time employment and 9% are in part-time employment, while 79% of people with autism on out-of-work benefits say they would like to work, with the right support.

- Project Search has been successful in supporting young people with Autism to learn skills for employment;
- A Choice for Life event will be held on the 24th March 2017 at Yeovil College. This will provide young people with SEND and their families information on further education, internships and work opportunities. The aim of the event will be to help raise the aspirations of children, young people and their families.

What next for Children and Young People?

- Work will continue to ensure that a range of information for individuals with Autism is included within Somerset Choices;
- Packs of information to be given to children, young people and their families at the point of diagnosis are in development. This is in direct response to requests from families and is supported by paediatrics;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the changes to the referral systems for CAOT and the update of the relaunched Cygnets program;
- Raise awareness of the Core Standards, the Local Offer within Somerset Choices and the SENDIAS and Independent supporter service to help Young people when applying for an EHCP;
- Continue to work with support services, education settings and other stakeholders to explore what further support would be helpful to enable them to support children and young people with autism;

- Providing resource bases for primary and secondary provision within four areas of the County - Mendip, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and South Somerset to reduce travelling for our young people.

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