

Update on the Somerset Autism Strategy

Lead Officer: Ann Anderson, Director of Clinical and Collaborative Commissioning, Somerset CCG and Stephen Chandler, Director of Adult Social Services, Somerset County Council

Author: Deborah Howard

Contact Details: 01935 385036 deborah.howard@somersetccg.nhs.uk

Cabinet Member:

Division and Local Member:

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Somerset Autism Strategy was launched in November 2015. The strategy sets out the commitment of Somerset County Council (SCC) and NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to improving the quality of life for people with autism and their families and carers in Somerset.
- 1.2. This paper provides a progress update on the implementation of the strategy and should be read in conjunction with the attached annual progress report.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the annual progress report and the supporting forward action.

3. Background

- 3.1. Our Strategy is aligned to the national strategy, *Think Autism*, (2014) whose 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.”*
- 3.2. The vision set out within our strategy is that Somerset aims to significantly improve knowledge and understanding of autism amongst the general public, statutory services, the voluntary sector and community based groups.
- 3.3. In addition, we aim to improve the way we all work together utilising the resources that are available to meet needs and improve outcomes for people with autism and their families/carers and give the information and support they need to remain as independent as possible.
- 3.4. There are a number of priority areas within the Strategy and the work required to address these forms the autism strategy action plan. The action plan is structured around four key areas of work. These are summarised within the attached annual report.

4. Progress Update on Somerset Autism Strategy

4.1. The Autism Strategy Group brings together, Somerset CCG and SCC commissioners from adults, children's and public health teams, along with a range of agencies. The group meets on a quarterly basis to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and the action plan. There are four sub groups which meet to take forward the action plan in respect of the following priority areas of work:

- Living with Autism
- Workforce Development
- Identification and Diagnosis
- Children and Young People

4.2. Following the sub group meetings, work stream leads provide updates to the strategy group.

4.3. A more detailed overview of the work and progress of each work stream is provided within the annual report. The main headlines for the priority areas are summarised within this covering report.

5. Living with Autism

5.1. The Living with Autism Sub Group is currently chaired by Somerset County Council. The group has made good progress with the main highlights being:

- The Somerset Autism Collections which have been placed in local libraries;
- The development of the Young People's Champion roles;
- The involvement of people with autism in the Strategy launch; the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services national autism lead advisor and NHS England visit and the procurement for the Learning Disabilities provider service;
- The BBC Somerset awareness raising programme which included people with autism giving their accounts of what life with autism is like;
- The development of a housing pathway for people with a Learning Disability (LD) an autism;
- Initiatives around employment and carers support.

Next Steps for Living with Autism

5.2. It is recognised that we need to take steps to make health checks more accessible to people with autism. Further work is also needed around housing, with the engagement of district councils to improve the housing options available for people with autism being key in taking the Strategy forward.

5.3. We need to further improve the mechanisms by which people with autism are involved in service developments / improvements, and we need to ensure that there is provision of social and community activities that are inclusive of people with autism and their carers and families.

6. Workforce Development

- 6.1.** The Workforce Development Group is chaired by Somerset County Council. There has been significant progress in taking forward the priority areas for this sub group. There is now 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.
- 6.2.** The first cohort of 'Autism Champions' have completed a four-module course. This means that there is now at least one worker in each of Somerset's Adult Social Care areas who have completed the course. Progress has been made with the police with training in autism and mental health now being planned.
- 6.3.** Two E-Learning courses (Autism Awareness and Intermediate Knowledge and Skills) are now available via the Learning Centre, for all SCC workers and external providers.

What Next for Workforce Development

- 6.4.** There is a need to expand an 'Introduction to Autism' to all workers. '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 and will include Children's Social Care for the first time. Avon and Somerset Police has agreed in principle to provide autism and mental health training for their officers and are working with the sub group to achieve this.
- 6.5.** 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.
- 6.6.** It is recognised that the sub group requires 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.

7. Identification and Diagnosis

- 7.1.** The Identification and Diagnosis Sub Group was previously chaired by Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Unfortunately the chair left the Trust and there have been some 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. A CCG GP Autism Lead is now in place and attends the Strategy Group.
 - A clear pathway to diagnosis is in place for adults and is included within the service specification for the Adult Asperger's Service provided by Somerset Partnership. A post diagnostic group is also in place;
 - Public health at SCC have commissioned work to map current community resources for people with autism. This work is now well underway and will be reported back to the strategy group and will inform signposting via professionals and organisational websites including Somerset Choices;
 - Autism resource packs have been developed by the Royal College of General Practitioners and shared across Somerset;
 - Mapping workshops took place during 2016 for children and young people. Guidance for referral criteria for children and young people with possible Autistic Spectrum Conditions has been developed along with a Protocol.

What Next for Identification and Diagnosis

- 7.2.** The Identification and Diagnosis Sub Group needs to reconvene with new chair. A review of the action plan will be required.
- 7.3.** Work will continue to ensure that a range of information for individuals with autism is included within Somerset Choices.
- 7.4.** A review of pathways to diagnosis for children and young people needs to take place and it has been agreed that the Designated Medical Officer (DMO) for SEND will take this work forward.
- 7.5.** In view of the waiting times for assessment, a further review of capacity, demand and performance within the Adult Asperger's Service needs to be completed. The pending report on diagnosis rates from GP registers is due at the end of March 2017 and will inform further planning.

8. Children and Young People

- 8.1.** This Children and Young People's Sub Group is chaired by the Somerset Parent Carer Forum.
 - SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) is developing their service for young people including working with the young people's champions for SEND making easy read versions of their information leaflets;
 - A multi - agency group including young people and parent carers has reviewed the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) paperwork and pathway guides to ensure it is user friendly including a young person's version.
 - 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;
 - SENDIAS have employed a member of staff to focus on support for young requesting an EHCP;
 - The approach to transition for young people within SCC is responding to the needs of young people differently. Through co-production we have been able to articulate what young people and their families feel is important. We aim to communicate the transitions work through the concept of Choices for Life. This will result in a reconfigured team which should reinforce person centred and outcome driven approaches from the earliest point;
 - 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.
- 8.2.** The Director of Quality and Safety is the CCG's named senior lead for work relating to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The CCG's SEND senior lead and SEND co-ordinator have represented the needs of this group of children and young people at senior leadership meetings throughout January and February 2017.

- 8.3. The CCG has used the [Council for Disabled Children's SEND audit tool](#) to review the SEND work programme and to identify areas for improvement. Somerset's Designated Medical Officer (DMO) for SEND is due to start in post in coming weeks. The DMO will support strategic work including pathway development, joint commissioning arrangements and work to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 8.4. The audit tool will be used again at the end of Q1 2017/18 to demonstrate measurable improvements as a result of the additional work within the SEND programme.

Next Steps for Children and Young People

- 8.5. As highlighted within the identification and assessment section of this report, further work is required to review and improve pathways.
- 8.6. Packs of information, will 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 Paediatric Services.
- 8.7. Monitoring of the effectiveness of the changes to the referral systems for the Children's Autism Outreach Team will take place and the update of the relaunched Cygnets programme will be also be monitored. Further work is needed to raise awareness of the Core Standards to help families and young people when applying for an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- 8.8. Work will continue to support services, education settings and other stakeholders to explore what further support would be helpful to enable them to better support children and young people with autism.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. This paper presents an update on the Somerset Autism Strategy. Progress has been in a number of areas as highlighted under each of the work streams.
- 9.2. While services have developed there is always more to do in assuring that outcomes are being met for individuals with autism and their families. Work will continue within each of the priority areas.
- 9.3. The committee are asked to note this report and to offer their ongoing support to delivery of the Autism Strategy.

10. Background papers

- 10.1. Appendix A - Annual Progress Report 2016