



Somerset Autism Strategy

Annual Report

Covering the work of the four sub groups

March 2018

## LIVING WITH AUTISM

### How are we doing?

The sub group meets regularly and progress is being made in taking forwards the priority areas for this sub group. It is chaired by Somerset CCG.

The sub group now has a good mix of attendees, with Public Health, Adult Social Care, DWP and Police attending regularly as well as the Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

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

- In January 2018, the Somerset Mental Wellbeing Service (SMWS) was launched. This is a new service to support good mental health, which will benefit people with autism experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. Commissioned by Somerset County Council (SCC), it will help people maintain and improve their mental wellbeing by developing support networks; increasing independence and accessing community resources. Please see [www.smws.org.uk/](http://www.smws.org.uk/)
- The national Transforming Care Programme continues in 2017/18 and Somerset health & social care commissioners are working to improve the care of people with learning disabilities and/or autism, with the aim of reducing admissions to learning disability or mental health hospitals and avoiding lengthy stays where admission to hospital is unavoidable. Somerset has also been successful in bidding for funding to purchase appropriate housing for people when they leave hospital. Please see [www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ctr-policy-v2.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ctr-policy-v2.pdf)

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

- A new and improved Carer's service was launched in October 2017, commissioned by Somerset County Council and Somerset NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This new service has developed links with the mental health carers' and young carers' services. Please see <http://somersetcarers.org/>
- Led by carers, Carers' Voice has strengthened its presence in Somerset as an influencing body concerned with improving the lives of unpaid carers in Somerset. Having developed Somerset's Commitment to Carers, the focus now is to ensure that it is embedded across statutory services. To support this, Carers' Voice Somerset designs and co facilitates "Solution Focused Workshops", which focus on the key issues and actions required to address them. In September 2017, 32 people attended including members of Carers' Voice Somerset, commissioners, service providers, representatives of a number of GP

Practices and the South West Carers Leads Network (ADASS).

**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:

- The launch event of the strategy and Somerset Autism Collections involved people with autism and featured individuals sharing their personal experiences of living with autism on BBC Somerset [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0373x0d](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.
- Continued development of the Young People's Champion roles and the Unstoppables within Children's Services, including their involvement in developing a SEND Participation Strategy.
- People with autism and their carers are fully involved in the individual Care & Treatment Reviews for the small number of patients in Somerset who meet the Transforming Care eligibility criteria.
- Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust joined the mATCH study in early 2017. The aim of the study is to better understand what is happening for people with autism who are detained in hospitals so that care pathways can be improved. Please see <https://research.kent.ac.uk/match/>

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

- Work is taking place to look at the potential to rollout of the Tenant Accreditation Scheme more widely for people with autism. The module based course equips people with the skills, knowledge and understanding required to seek independent accommodation and to successfully maintain a home and tenancy.
- A housing pathway for people with additional needs, including autism has been developed and shared with social care staff. It provides detailed information about the different housing options available in Somerset to people with additional needs, the support available and further information and resources.
- Housing Officers in Mendip were invited to attend an Autism Awareness training event, arranged by Somerset County Council. This was a hugely successful event which we are hoping to replicate in other areas.

**Priority: Increase public awareness of autism**

- SCC and CCG have 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](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p001d78n/clips)
- Autism Somerset hold a fortnightly slot with Sedgemoor FM, to discuss a variety of autism issues for listeners.
- The Children & Young People Sub group are creating an “Autism friendly” schools award to promote across Somerset schools.
- Basic Autism Awareness e-learning has now been made available to Somerset staff, for all agencies working with people with Autism.
- The Safe Places scheme has been rolled out across the Avon & Somerset Police area.

**Priority: Promote employment opportunities for people with autism**

- 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/>
- Somerset Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are running a pilot in Yeovil for unemployed ladies with low mood, aged 18 years and over. If the pilot is successful, it may be considered in other areas and could be targeted at people with autism. DWP have also sponsored a Gaming course in Taunton, for people with autism and now have employed 5 Disability Employment Advisors to assist people with disabilities to access volunteer work and employment opportunities
- DWP are using their staff who have their own experience of living with a disability to influence to workplaces and preparing advisors on training packages (being customer focussed and considering reasonable adjustments to assist people with disabilities when accessing employment support).

**What next for Living with Autism?**

- We need to further improve the support available to people with autism in the community, to ensure that even if they do not meet the criteria for statutory services, they are able to access support to live fulfilling and rewarding lives.
- Further work is needed to ensure that we create opportunities for people with autism to contribute to the Autism Strategy refresh and have a meaningful participation strategy.
- Engagement with district councils in the subgroup to improve the housing options available for people with autism and investigate whether the tenant accreditation scheme or similar can support people with autism to access housing.
- 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.
- Make sure that employment as an outcome is included in needs assessments for young autistic people and autistic adults as appropriate.
- Take steps to make health checks more accessible to people with autism.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### How are we doing?

The sub group meets regularly and progress is being made in defining groups of workers who require training. It is chaired by SCC. There has been progress this year, in taking forwards the priority areas for this sub group.

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**

- Some progress has been made to improve the mix of members of the 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 SCC 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.

### **Priority: Investigate and secure additional funding (e.g. Clinical Innovation Fund)**

- Funding was secured in 2017, through internal sources at SCC, for a training session on autism with housing colleagues in the Mendip area.

### **Priority: Identify groups and services / adults mapping including parents and GPs**

- 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 has been made with the police, with training in autism and mental health now being planned. School staff training needs are met through a specialist service.

### **Priority: Develop multi-tier framework – varied training according to professional role and level of involvement with**

**people with autism**

- E-Learning - The Learning Centre now has two courses available to all SCC workers and external providers: 'Autism Awareness' and 'Intermediate knowledge and skills'. Please see [https://someset.learningpool.com/pluginfile.php/27670/mod\\_scorm/content/1/index\\_lms.html#/](https://someset.learningpool.com/pluginfile.php/27670/mod_scorm/content/1/index_lms.html#/)
- The e-learning will be made available to GP practices/practitioners, as an additional resource.

**What next for workforce development?**

- Plans to expand 'Introduction to Autism' to all workers and 'Dementia Friends' – style sessions have been agreed in principle.
- An Advanced Introduction to Autism course, run by clinicians from Somerset Partnership, aimed at mental health workers but also suitable for other colleagues in social care. Three courses are planned to run in March 2018, hoping to reach up to 60 workers. Four more are planned for 2018/19, subject to finances.
- 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 has been 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.

**IDENTIFICATION AND DIAGNOSIS**

## How are we doing?

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 has been discussed at the Autism Strategy Group. Given the demands on resources within the Autism Service, it has been proposed that a representative from the Education service chair this group.

### **Priority: Improve the way we provide support for those who have had a diagnosis.**

- Post diagnostic group in place for adult and provided by the Adult Asperger's Service, Somerset Partnership.
- Referral pathways are in place between Somerset Partnership and SCC social care for individuals with social care needs

### **Priority: Review the existing pathways to diagnosis**

- A clear pathway for adults is in place and included within the service specification for the Adult Asperger's Service.
- The first meeting of the Task and Finish Group established to map support available to children & young people with behavioural presentations, and their families/carers, was held in January 2018 and a further two meetings are planned for February and March. The work from this group will include a route to diagnosis after a number of other steps have been taken.
- Somerset Partnership has started a Triage system for referrals and following a more targeted approach to identify people who meet criteria for services, the referral to treatment time and caseloads within the service have been considerably reduced.

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

- SCC Public Health commissioned work to map current community resources for people with autism. This work looked at local, regional, national and international sources of information and support for people with autism. The work also looked at gaps in services in Somerset and made some recommendations for the Living with Autism Group to consider. The summary of information and support services was provided to the Autism Strategy Group in the form of a 'directory' – and the information has been uploaded to Somerset Choices.

### **Priority: Promote awareness about pathways to diagnosis**

- The Somerset Autism Spectrum Service was implemented during 2017, managed by Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation



Trust, for people aged 18 and over. Details of the service, including referral details, are now available through the Somerset Partnership website. Please see [www.sompar.nhs.uk/what-we-do/mental-health/somerset-autism-spectrum-service/](http://www.sompar.nhs.uk/what-we-do/mental-health/somerset-autism-spectrum-service/)

- The Somerset Autism Spectrum Service has been targeting those patients who meet the criteria for services and providing follow up work for those patients who are in need of health interventions. The service is assessing people who meet the criteria more quickly and the caseload has been reduced.
- GP practices have been informed of the new service and that the service is now working to the DSM-5 criteria, so that the threshold for accepting referrals is a little higher than it was previously, particularly in focussing on the need for significant impact on functioning.
- 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).
- Since January 2017, following a secure information sharing process that was agreed by IG leads at each provider site, Adult LD and Autism data from Somerset County Council and Somerset Partnership has been shared with Musgrove and Yeovil hospitals. This has resulted in the update of 1390 patient records with an LD and Autism flag, in advance of their next Acute care episode. The data is shared on a six monthly basis, there have been two cycles to date, with the third currently underway, so the 1390 number quoted above will no doubt increase. Refreshed data will be available, when updates from Musgrove and Yeovil colleagues have been received, as they are currently processing the January 2018 files.

**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.
- Since January 2017, following a secure information sharing process that was agreed by IG leads at each provider site, Adult LD and Autism data from SCC and SomPar has been shared with Musgrove and Yeovil hospitals. This has resulted in the update of 1390 patient records with an LD and Autism flag, in advance of their next Acute care episode. The data is shared on

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### **What next for identification and diagnosis?**

- Sub group to reconvene with new chair to review action plan.
- Continue to flag patients with Autism, to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made when they need to access healthcare services.
- The SEND Needs Assessment Action Plan for Somerset recognises early support and behavioural intervention is the crucial part which will help all children, regardless of whether there may be underlying ASD (or ADHD etc). As part of the graduated/stratified support process, there will be opportunities to refer to services such as Paediatrics & CAMHS when felt appropriate. It is also crucial that Paediatric services & CAMHS develop red flags for children who need to be seen more urgently – this is in place already, but needs bringing together as one single pathway.

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **How are we doing?**

**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 currently being refreshed in response to user feedback. SCC recently commissioned a directory of Autism services and these have been uploaded to the Local Offer.
- 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; The SEND Engagement and Participation strategy has been refreshed and this now in an informal consultation period.
- 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. The information on the Local Offer has been updated in response to user feedback.

**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.
- Paediatrician's signpost parents to Somerset Parent Carer Forum at the beginning of the diagnosis journey, who can then signpost to appropriate support and resources at the various stages.
- 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.

- Resources and training for schools has been mapped and recorded in one place and this has been disseminated and is available on the Local Offer. Work is underway to provide education settings with a self-evaluation framework for the Core Standards. A leaflet has also been designed for families.

**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.**

- Somerset Department for Work and Pensions have appointed 5 Disability Employment Advisors, who have been concentrating on wellbeing events for customers in local venues.
- Project Search has continued to be successful in supporting young people with Autism to learn skills for employment at Musgrove Park Hospital and Yeovil District Hospital.
- Building on the Choice for Life strategy young people with SEND (and their family's) are provided with information on further education, internships and work opportunities. Now embedded in the carers fairs, the events raise aspirations of children, young people and their families.
- SCC's Choices for Life Strategy includes Pathways to Employment for young people with SEND, which includes training and work experience opportunities within SCC.
- Somerset Parent Carer Forum organised 2 Challenging Behaviour workshops which were oversubscribed. It was agreed at the Autism Strategy group that we need a universal training programme for all parents (similar to Cygnet, although Cygnet is only for children and young people with a diagnosis of Autism).

### **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.
- Work with partner agencies, potentially through the SEND groups, to establish a universal training programme that will help give parents the support strategies they need at home.

## **Glossary**

CCG Clinical Commissioning Group

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

SCC Somerset County Council

SMWS Somerset Mental Wellbeing Service

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