

Progress on the implementation of the Welsh Assembly Government Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) strategic action plan

Overview

In April 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government launched its Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) strategic action plan, a ground-breaking document which outlined how the Welsh Assembly Government and local agencies would seek to meet the needs of people affected by autism¹ and their families in Wales. It is a ten year plan that will be reviewed every three years.

Before the launch of the ASD strategic action plan, service provision for individuals with autism and their families was extremely patchy. There were few people with the relevant autism specific experience who were able to work with people affected by the condition. Where services did exist, they were often oversubscribed and difficult to access. The needs of individuals and families often remained unmet.

With appropriate service provision and support individuals with autism can be successfully included in their local community, and can achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to society. Families and carers of people with autism can be supported in their caring roles. However, a lack of access to appropriate services and support at an early stage can lead to children and adults with autism developing additional difficulties such as mental health problems, which can have devastating effects and lead to more costly interventions at a later stage.

The good news was that if local authorities succeeded in meeting their specific obligations under the terms of the funding attached to delivery of the ASD strategic action plan, measurable improvements would be achieved.

¹ We use the term autism here to cover all people on the autism spectrum, including autism, Asperger syndrome and other diagnostic terms used for autism spectrum conditions.

In this paper the National Autistic Society Cymru (NAS Cymru) has laid out how things are progressing in Wales, both at a national and local level, and considers how new arrangements are being shaped to improve outcomes for people affected by autism.

NAS Cymru is the charity working throughout Wales for people affected by autism. A local charity with a national presence, the NAS campaigns and lobbies for lasting positive change for those affected by autism in Wales and across the rest of the UK. 1 in 100 people have autism – that’s over 25,000 people in Wales. For more information about the NAS Cymru and autism, please see *appendix 1*.

The ASD strategic action plan highlights the need for greater support and service provision for people with autism and their families. The plan also states that the needs of people affected by autism should be clearly considered when commissioning local services: *“Commissioners should ensure that Children’s Plans and Local Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies, completed in 2008, include an overview of the arrangements for commissioning services for children, young people and adults with ASD over the lifetime of the Plans, including those commissioned locally and otherwise.”*²

In the plan, the Welsh Assembly Government sets clear actions around the development of ASD stakeholder groups in local areas. The expectation is that the Children and Young People’s Partnership and Health Social Care and Well Being Strategic Partnerships will play a lead role in this:

“Commissioners and service providers through the Children and Young People’s partnerships and Local Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy groups ... identify an ASD champion with sufficient knowledge and seniority, who will work with key stakeholders to promote this work, subsequent planning, service delivery and monitoring.”

*“Children and Young People’s partnerships and Local Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategic Partnerships should support the establishment of an ASD co-ordinating group in each local area.”*⁴

A full copy of the ASD strategic action plan can be accessed online at www.wales.gov.uk/strategy

² WAG (2008) Autistic Spectrum Disorder action plan, Action 9.1, page 3

³ WAG (2008) Autistic Spectrum Disorder action plan, Action 8.1, page 2/3

⁴ WAG (2008) Autistic Spectrum Disorder action plan, Action 9.7, page 4

Funding

In 2007/08, £1.7 million (recurring) was allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). This funding was allocated to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and children's social services, with the expectation that this funding will continue to enhance the further development of services for children and young people affected by autism locally. This funding remains year on year for local authorities to draw on.

In addition, and to coincide with the launch of the ASD strategic action plan in April 2008, a further £1.8 million was allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government for the financial year 2008/9 to be spent on implementing the ASD Action Plan at a local level. This money was ring-fenced. Local Authorities were notified by the Welsh Assembly Government in October 2008 that £60,000 was to be made available to each local authority to enable the delivery of specific key actions outlined in the ASD strategic action plan and to improve services at a local level.

The Welsh Assembly Government then made funding of £1.8million available (for financial year 2009/10) to support the delivery of the plan in the financial year 2009/10. Local authorities were notified in June 2009 that a core grant of £40,000 had been made available to them to be used specifically to provide focus, direction and coordination for autism planning, development and provision at local level across all ages and all sectors. This was in addition to the £1.7m recurring funding through the RSG.

For the 2010/11 financial year the Welsh Assembly Government has again allocated £1.8million across Wales to the continued support of the implementation of the ASD strategic action plan. In June 2010, local authorities were notified that they would receive £40,000 in order to continue local developments.

At this time, there has been no announcement from the Assembly Government of intentions for funding in the next financial year beyond the £1.7m recurring funding through the RSG.



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Local authorities should be aware that they are expected to have used the funding announced thus far to strategically reconfigure or redesign existing services or commission new ones in order to meet their obligations in delivering the ASD strategic action plan in the long term.

In January 2010, the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM, announced a further £1.7million funding stream across the 3 year period of 2010 – 2013. This is for the specific purpose of developing services and support for adults with autism across Wales.

Local Planning Arrangements

To deliver for people affected by autism it is clear that the new approaches being driven forward by the ASD strategic action plan must be embedded in local processes and planning structures. It has been vital to establish clear links across the full range of statutory organisations. The mechanism for this has been the formation of multi-agency ASD stakeholder groups in each local authority area, and the appointment of an ASD lead role to steer the work.

The local ASD stakeholder groups should report into both the Children and Young People's Partnership and the Health, Social Care and Well Being Partnership locally. It has been important that strong links are made with all relevant operational plans. The overall aim is a consistent and coordinated approach to the development and subsequent implementation of new ways to achieve effective person centred outcomes for children, young people and adults with autism and their families and carers.

It is important to recognise that local authorities work in a variety of ways and that the emerging structures in respect of the development of autism support and services do vary across Wales. However what is very positive is that there are now specific multi-agency groups in all local authorities with the lead responsibility of developing and implementing local ASD action plans in line with the ASD strategic action plan.

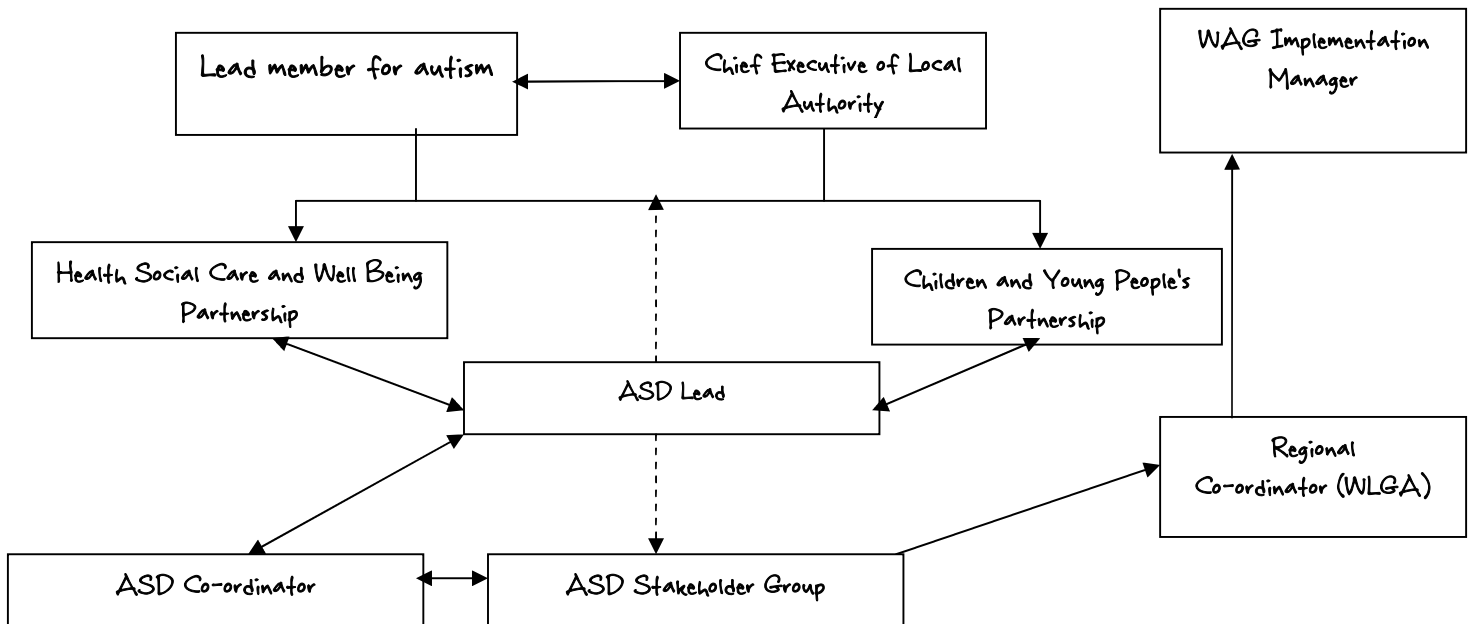


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Local ASD strategic action plan implementation arrangements may look as follows:



NAS Cymru is aware of the range of variations to the above model, but it broadly echoes the emerging working arrangements.

Welsh Assembly Government Implementation Manager

Hugh Morgan OBE provides strategic leadership on the implementation of the ASD strategic action plan at local and national level.

Regional Support Arrangements

To support local authorities and their statutory and voluntary sector partners to deliver on the ASD strategic action plan, a national resource is being hosted within the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) until March 2011. This comprises of a full-time regional ASD support team Co-ordinator, David Poole, and

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three full-time regional ASD support officers - Johanna Manikiza (South East Wales), Mary Rendell (Mid and West Wales), and Sharon Walters (North Wales).

The key aim of the team is to support the development of a robust service infrastructure, both at a regional and local level, which will ensure appropriate agencies are well positioned to meet the expectations of the ASD strategic action plan. Some key elements of that support are:

- Technical assistance in identifying the number of people in local areas with ASD and the likely future demand for services, including mapping existing services to establish potential gaps in addressing need
- Provision of high-quality advice to ASD leads in local areas so that these individuals are enabled to make effective decisions regarding the future planning, commissioning, delivery and monitoring of services
- Designing, together with local service providers, new service models which build collaboration both between local authorities and their partners, and across sectors
- Facilitating the sharing of emerging service-based learning and practice across regions and nationally
- Development of web-based communication and training materials, both for those using services and practitioners, in order to improve awareness of ASD and facilitate the sharing of effective practice.

This team, in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government, published a national public newsletter in May 2010 that provides updates for people with autism, their family and carers about progress being made by the Welsh Assembly Government in the delivery of the ASD strategic action plan.

For more information on the work of this team and access to the newsletter, please visit their website at www.ssiacymru.org.uk/asd.



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Local Autism Leads

The establishment of a named lead for autism in each local authority was a priority in year one of the plan under the 2008/09 round of funding from the Welsh Assembly Government. Local ASD leads should now be in place. In some authorities ASD co-ordinators have been appointed to take forward ASD development, or to support the work of ASD leads. It is the intention that the local ASD lead will provide strategic direction to take forward key actions outlined in the ASD strategic action plan and will work with key stakeholders to deliver on the plan at a local level. This will have included delivering on other year one priorities including the gathering of data on the numbers of children and adults with ASD locally, and the mapping of existing provision and gaps in services and support for children, adults and families. The formation of a local stakeholder group (including representation from parents and carers and people with autism) to drive forward planning and development in line with the plan was also a priority, along with the production of a local autism plan, informed by the mapping exercise. Local authorities should now have completed these priorities.

Funding for this financial year (£40,000 as referred to above) is being provided specifically to provide continued focus, direction and co-ordination for autism planning, development and provision at local level across all ages and sectors. There is a clear expectation at both Government and service user levels that services will tangibly improve during this financial year.

The ASD strategic action plan specifies that the local ASD lead roles should be filled by people with sufficient knowledge and seniority to work with key stakeholders. A commitment to supporting the autism service development at a local level across all statutory service boundaries is vital. However, the key issue is that whatever structures are put in place at a local level, they must be outcome driven and effectively supported across the full range of stakeholders. When embedding this type of post it is important to consider where this role 'sits' in order to ensure that influence and direction is set across children and adults services and engagement across health, education and social services is facilitated, and current arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that this is the case.



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ASD Stakeholder Group

All local authorities will now have their stakeholder group in place, although more work is needed to strengthen them in some areas.

In establishing this group it is vital that membership and function is carefully considered and communicated. Such groups should provide a forum for local agencies to work together to take account of the needs of people with autism and deliver the ASD strategic action plan locally. The group should link with planning and commissioning structures for local services in order to develop tangible outcomes to drive forward service development. The Welsh Assembly Government have made it clear that local groups should be *“multi-agency, including service users and carers, and inform and support agreed cross-agency approaches to strategic planning for commissioning of services for people with ASD”*⁵

Given that the overall aim of the group is to improve access to better local services by all people with autism and their families, members of ASD stakeholder group should work together towards ensuring all members are clear what their responsibilities are, in relation to service development and working towards collective and achievable targets. The group should establish ways to promote the needs of people with autism and ensure that autism is kept on the agenda within other groups. The group should provide the infrastructure to ensure that effective commissioning is developed to improve response to areas of identified need, e.g. adults with Asperger syndrome. The group should have the capacity to champion new developments, to ensure continuous improvement in standards and to ensure that funding is ring-fenced for pooling purposes.⁶

It should also promote effective commissioning as a key function, by using links with other ASD stakeholder groups, through the regional forum and liaison with the regional ASD support officer, to ensure collective strategic planning and regional delivery, where appropriate.

⁵ *ibid*, Action 9.7, page 4

⁶ Taken from the report, 'Improving Commissioning Standards in Services for Children and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders'. Available on the NAS website - www.autism.org.uk

Membership should be broad and cross adults and children's services. One of the key challenges to the success of this group will be to operate across traditional boundaries, and therefore it is imperative that senior involvement from both health and local authority is integral to the development of this work.

Key representation from the following areas will provide a firm platform from which to drive forward development initiatives in line with the ASD strategic action plan:

- Chair – preferably a lead Director or lead Member (this may be the ASD lead)
- Deputy Chair – to attend meetings alongside the chair and to take on the role of the chair in their absence. The deputy chair would ideally work within a different agency from the chair
- Parents and carers
- Individuals with autism
- Education and Lifelong learning – specialist and mainstream
- The Health board
- Social services – Children's and Adult's
- CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services
- Careers Wales
- Housing
- Older people
- Voluntary sector
- Principal Commissioners (When this is not possible, the chair should ensure that they have a direct link to them).

It is also important to consider establishing key links with elected members (or if not, sending them minutes) and having an annual review of group membership, to ensure that the right people at the right level are, and continue to be, involved in the group.

Whilst, as previously mentioned, local authorities have set up their ASD stakeholder groups in a range of ways, all have these in place. Some local authorities have also taken the step of establishing annual ASD



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stakeholder conferences to ensure regular and wider consultation and communication with those affected by autism.

Supporting people affected by autism to be part of local ASD stakeholder groups

The Welsh Assembly Government has made it clear that local authorities have an obligation to actively work to involve people with autism and their families in stakeholder groups. Local organisations including NAS Cymru can provide links to parent groups and individuals who may be interested in taking part locally. The National Autistic Society has produced guidance to help public authorities involve people with autism. *Involving People with Autism: A Guide for Public Authorities*, and *Autism and the Disability Equality Duty* can both be accessed at www.autism.org.uk

Alternatively, to access a hard copy, please email Rebecca Evans, Policy and Public Affairs Officer for NAS Cymru, at rebecca.evans@nas.org.uk or telephone 02920 629312.

Local ASD Action Plans

All local ASD action plans should now have been submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government. It is NAS Cymru's understanding that these have been evaluated and used to inform strategic national and local priorities.



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National Developments

Adult Task and Finish Group

As the ASD strategic action plan focused mainly on children with ASD, the Welsh Assembly Government set up an Adult Task and Finish Group to explore and make recommendations on a series of priority areas for adults: Diagnosis, Access to Services, Community and Monitoring Support, Employment and Related Issues, and Housing. NAS Cymru welcomed the publication of the Group's report in January 2010, and the series of recommendations which have been accepted by Ministers.

The ASD Implementation Manager is now working with stakeholders to:

- develop and introduce during 2010-11 an all-Wales network offering a diagnostic service for adults together with a pre/post counselling service. WAG has made available £752,055 over a three year period commencing in 2010-11 for this purpose;
- develop ASD specific Assessment Tools and awareness raising materials for those involved in the assessment process. One-off funding of £20,000 in 2010-11 has been made available for this purpose;
- provide additional monitoring/support for adults with Asperger syndrome on a regional basis; host an all Wales Practice Conference on Adults with ASD (this took place in June 2010); provide training for advocacy personnel working with adults with ASD; and to provide an information website for adults with ASD and their carers. Funding of £740,000 over three years commencing in 2010-11 has been made available for this purpose;
- spearhead a publicity campaign targeting employers and businesses throughout Wales, including an all-Wales employment publicity campaign; appoint a Wales ASD Employment Ambassador; and produce awareness raising and training support for staff within Careers Wales, JobCentre Plus and for Disability Employment Advisors. Funding of £170,000 over a three year period commencing in 2010-11 has been made available for this purpose;



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- identify existing design research and collating into a toolkit to assist architects and others in designing housing for people with ASD; and promote awareness of ASD in frontline housing services. One-off funding of £10,000 in 2010 -11 has been made available for this purpose.

You can find the report of the Adult Task and Finish Group on the WAG website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/reports/asd/;jsessionid=T2GwL2NMvxHvv0xpqpN7hhY5QJzvPQP97YJcwslRVhj4vsb29W7f!795802863?lang=en&ts=4>

In recognition of the scale of the issues facing adults with autism in Wales, the Adult Task and Finish Group is continuing to function with the following new key priorities: Further and Higher Education, Transition (including to employment), DWP Welfare Reforms, the Criminal Justice System, and Mental Health. NAS Cymru has representation on the Adult Task and Finish Group, and continues to support the Welsh Assembly Government as it takes forward this work.

Awareness Raising Materials

The Welsh Assembly Government has established a number of workgroups which are developing awareness raising materials specifically targeted at a wide range of practitioner groups, including those working in primary healthcare, places of worship, high street outlets, education and social services, as well as those offering family support. Materials are also being produced for the families of people with autism.

The workgroups are being led by representatives from organisations including NAS Cymru and Autism Cymru, as well as the Regional Support Officers mentioned earlier, and others with specific expertise. A Standards Panel appointed by WAG will monitor quality, consistency and readability. WAG intends to formally launch these materials in autumn 2010.

The Welsh Assembly Government has also funded Autism Cymru to produce three information booklets for those living and working with young children with ASD: 'Communication, Communication,' 'Learning to Play, Playing to Learn,' and 'Oh No! Not Big School,' which contains information and ideas for transition planning for young people with ASD moving from primary to secondary school.



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The publication of Quality Standards in Education for pupils with ASD was a key action point within the ASD Strategic Action Plan. The Welsh Assembly Government is continues to work toward delivery on this.

Chair in Autism Research, Cardiff University

The Welsh Assembly Government has contributed to the funding of a Chair in Autism Research at the University of Cardiff. Professor Sue Leekam was appointed to the post in April 2009 and is the first named Chair in Autism Research in the UK. The formal launch of the Welsh Autism Research Centre, including Professor Leekam's inaugural public lecture, has been set for 23rd September 2010. The Welsh Assembly Government has also asked Professor Leekam to undertake an evaluation of children's autism assessment and diagnosis throughout Wales, and it is expected that she will report with her findings by the end of the year.

Older People Research

The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned research into the circumstances and support needs of older people with autism. The research was undertaken jointly by the Universities of Glamorgan and Bangor and a report was published in February 2010. Both the Minister for Health & Social Services and the Deputy Minister for Social Services have considered the final report, and in response they have requested that Professor Sue Leekam, the Chair in Autism, Cardiff University, looks at the recommendations arising, consults, and then reports to Ministers by 30th November 2010, with proposals. They Ministers have also commissioned a piece of work to explore how Phase 2 of the National Service Framework for Older People can help address the needs of older people with autism.

Review

The Welsh Assembly Government will review the impact of its ASD strategic action plan at the end of the first 3 year period. This is likely to be towards the end of 2010 and over early 2011. It is the understanding of NAS Cymru that this will then inform the key priorities and obligations that local authorities will be directed to progress moving forward.



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How can NAS Cymru help?

There are several things that we do to help at local level. These include linking authorities with local parent groups and helping to identify individuals affected by autism that may be interested in participating in local stakeholder groups, and supporting the work of local stakeholder groups through advising on particular issues where appropriate. As NAS Cymru is the leading provider of specialist services and support for people with autism and their families in Wales, we offer expertise and advice as well as service models, and provide representation to support the work of local stakeholder groups, and share examples of best practice (see *appendix 2*). Currently NAS Cymru works with 80% of local authorities across Wales to support local understanding and development.

Conclusion

The publication of the ASD strategic action plan continues to provide a range of challenges and new ways of working for statutory agencies in Wales. However, fundamentally, the establishment of an ASD lead and an ASD stakeholder group at a local level provides a basis for autism to be considered specifically in its own right for the first time. This provides a real opportunity to consider and address in a formal way some of the very real issues that local authorities face in supporting people affected by autism and their families and deliver real and lasting change. The Welsh Assembly Government have else delivered on a national and regional support network to assist local authorities in the implementation of the ASD strategic action plan.

We look forward to working with you in the coming months to improve access to services and support for people affected by autism and their families across Wales.

For more information contact:

Shirley Parsley, National Co-ordinator Wales

National Autistic Society Cymru Tel: 02920 629310 Email: shirley.parsley@nas.org.uk



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Appendix 1: The National Autistic Society Cymru (NAS Cymru) and Autism

NAS Cymru is the charity working throughout Wales for people affected by autism. We are part of the UK's leading charity for autism. We were founded in 1962 by a group of parents who were passionate about ensuring a better future for their children. Today across the UK we have over 18000 members and 80 branches. NAS Cymru has 9 branches and over 800 members. We also link to a range of independent autism parent support groups. In Wales, we provide:

- Information, advice, advocacy, training and support for individuals and their families
- Information and training for health, education and other professionals working with people with autism and their families
- Specialist residential, supported living, outreach and day services for adults
- Out-of-school services for children and young people
- Social programmes for adults with autism.

A local charity with a national presence, we campaign and lobby for lasting positive change for those affected by autism in Wales and across the rest of the UK.

What is an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share three main areas of difficulty, their condition will affect them in different ways. The three main areas of difficulty (sometimes known as the 'triad of impairments'⁷) are:

- Difficulty with social interaction. This includes recognising and understanding other people's feelings and managing their own. Not understanding how to interact with other people can make it hard to form friendships

⁷ Wing, L. and Gould, J. (1979) Severe impairments of social interaction and associated abnormalities in children: epidemiology and classification. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, Vol. 9(1), pp. 11-29

- Difficulty with social communication. This includes using and understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice
- Difficulty with social imagination. This includes the ability to understand and predict other people's intentions and behaviour and to imagine situations outside of their own routine. This can be accompanied by a narrow repetitive range of activities.

Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may need a lifetime of specialist care. People with autism may also experience some form of sensory sensitivity or under-sensitivity, for example to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.

What is Asperger Syndrome (AS)?

Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language. People with Asperger syndrome may not necessarily have learning disabilities but often have accompanying learning difficulties, including dyslexia.

Autism is still relatively unknown and misunderstood. That means that many of the children, young people, adults and their families affected by autism get nothing like the level of help, support and understanding they need.



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Appendix 2: Examples of Good Practice

Good practice example: Cumbria County Council

In October 2006, Cumbria undertook a mapping exercise into the prevalence of autism in the area. This looked at both children and adults and followed a similar exercise undertaken by them in 2003.

Since the work was last conducted, there has been a 60% increase in the numbers of adults with autism counted or recorded in Cumbria. Although people with Asperger syndrome or high functioning autism have not been fully captured in this work, it is hoped that they will be in future.

As a result of this work, a number of recommendations were made, including:

- That the capacity of existing data systems to record diagnosis of ASD should be explored
- The mapping exercise should be repeated every 2-3 years until such time as a comprehensive data system is available in order to plan service developments
- The possibility of developing a diagnostic service for adults either regionally or locally should be explored.

Good practice example: Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council, funded by central government with Learning Disability Development Fund money, has formulated a strategy for the changes needed if adults with autism are to be properly accounted for by services. A wide-ranging action plan was produced as part of this work. To inform the strategy, a mapping exercise into the number of young people with autism in Surrey was undertaken. Information about children came from the Children with Disability register, specialist schools and children's social work teams. Information about adults came from care management teams and Surrey Oaklands Trust. This mapping



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exercise significantly increased the number of people with autism recognised within Surrey, but the report acknowledged that a large number of people with autism living in the area would not have been identified through the work. In future, it is hoped that the Surrey Adults Linked Disability Registers will provide clearer centrally-available information about adults with autism, including those who do not receive services.

Good practice example: Conwy Vulnerable Adults Panel

In Conwy, adults with Asperger syndrome are offered an assessment by the most appropriate team. Following the assessment they are discussed by a vulnerable adults panel who decide which is the most appropriate team to support the individual, depending on their difficulties. The teams attending include learning disabilities; mental health; older people; and vulnerable adults with housing problems.

Good practice example: Ceredigion Autism Team

Ceredigion social services have worked in partnership with local and national agencies and voluntary organisations to develop a set of core principles around services for adults with autism. As a result of this an autism service development plan has been introduced and a specialist autism team established. While the team is based in Ceredigion's learning disability team, they work with a range of teams in the authority and local health services.

The team also works with people across the autism spectrum, providing most of their support in the community. This support includes giving advice and information following diagnosis; offering practical support to individuals and their families around such issues as challenging behaviour; supporting people to access work and leisure activities; and providing mentoring and independence support for adults with Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism to help them on a day-to-day basis. The team also aims to make existing services more autism-friendly.



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The team is gradually building up a picture of people with autism in the local community – where they live and the support needs they have. Given the rural nature of the area, access to local services and support can still be an issue. The autism service development plan has identified this as an area for further work

Good practice example: Liverpool Asperger Team

The Liverpool Asperger Team is one of the best known examples of autism good practice in England. It was established in 2003, following recommendations from an Asperger steering group regarding the need for an Asperger syndrome specific multi-disciplinary team. Funded by the Central Liverpool PCT and the local authority, it currently consists of a Team Manager (who is also a Head Speech and Language Therapist), two community nurses, two clinical psychologists, an assistant psychologist, a social worker, two support workers, an assistant clinician and an administrator.

The team has a person-centred approach and uses the concept of a managed care pathway both to provide direct support itself and to refer on and support others to provide assistance. The wider network includes specialist services for mental health, alcohol and substance misuse and the criminal justice system. The care management role will normally be undertaken by a member of the team in relation to employment support, education, and other statutory and non statutory services.

Since the formation of the Liverpool Asperger Team, over 400 individuals have been referred for assessment and intervention (although not all qualify for support). Referrals must be over 18 (although they will see young people aged between 16-18 and liaise with children's services if the person is in significant need and is unable to access other services) and a resident of Liverpool or have a Liverpool GP. People do not have to have a formal diagnosis of Asperger syndrome, as the team also carries out diagnostic work.

The team has made a real difference to adults with Asperger syndrome who live in the area, and they are keen to share the good practice they have developed. In Wales, the scheme has had some influence. For example, in Gwent, local agencies are working in partnership to provide a service solution to address the needs of the adult population affected by Asperger Syndrome. This will be informed by good practice examples such as

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the Liverpool Asperger Team and others; In North Wales, NAS Cymru is also aware that consideration is being given to how best to support adults with Asperger Syndrome in north Wales, potentially along the lines of the Liverpool Asperger Team model.



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