

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Committee **9th September 2009**

Report Title **Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Transitions**

Summary
 This report will update the committee on the progress by both Adults and Children’s Services in providing services for individuals with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC’s) and the continual improvements in the transitions process for young people reaching adulthood in the County.

The report will feedback some of the positive practice Warwickshire has put in place to support those individuals with high functioning autism (HFA) and Aspergers Syndrome who were previously not eligible for adult services by using the Low Level Support Service and will report on how this and other work in developing our transitions process has been recognised at a national level.

For further information please contact:
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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?
 No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees

Local Member(s) Not Applicable

Other Elected Members Councillor L Caborn, Councillor T May, Councillor F McCarney, Councillor R Dodd

Cabinet Member Councillor C Hayfield

- Chief Executive
- Legal Alison Hallworth, Adult and Community Team Leader
- Finance Chris Norton, Strategic Finance Manager
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Louise Denton, Scrutiny Officer

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9th September 2009

Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Transitions

Report of the Strategic Director of Adult, Health and Community Services

Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee consider and comment on this report, and agree for officers in both Children's and Adults Services to continue to improve services for this client group and all Warwickshire residents who are affected by transitions.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The momentum around providing services to individuals on the Autistic Spectrum has increased significantly since the last presentation to Adults and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committees last year. Much progress has been made in developing services for this group within the County and with the publication of the new Autism Bill there is likely to be a continued focus on meeting the needs of this group for the foreseeable future.
- 1.2 The progress we have made in AHCS in offering a service to individuals with an ASC are:
- Information about individuals with ASC continues to improve especially around those individuals in transition.
 - Joint working across children's and adult services continues to improve.
 - Partnership work with colleges is beginning to improve practice and support.
 - All individuals with autism who meet the criteria for FACS are being assessed and having services commissioned from the Learning Disability Team whether they have a learning disability or not. Individuals with a primary mental health need are having their needs assessed within mental health services.
 - Individuals with high functioning autism and Aspergers Syndrome not meeting FACS criteria can now be referred to our new Low Level Support Service.
 - We have a property in South Warwickshire that has been ring fenced to support adults with a learning disability and autism with support provided by Autism Care.

2. National Audit Office Study

- 2.1 The National Autistic Societies (NAS) "I Exist" campaign raised the political

profile of autism both locally and nationally and culminated with an in-depth survey by the National Audit Office (NAO) finally published in 2009.

2.2 The NAO survey focused on what support adults with autism and their carers in England get. The NAO return was difficult but did allow us to highlight some pockets of good practice in the county which we have developed on allowing us to recently publish a much clearer care pathway for individuals on the spectrum whatever their needs.

2.3 The main findings of the NAO survey reported were that:

- People in charge of support services need to get better information together about how many people with autism there are in their local area.
- Schools tasked with developing transition support plans for disabled children at aged 14 do not know enough about autism and the support individuals are getting or require.
- The support for individuals with ASC should be available locally to reduce the number of out of county and expensive placements.
- People with autism and their carers should get the help and support they need to choose their own support.
- More training is needed on autism, including how to communicate with individuals with ASC, for doctors, health staff and social care staff, including those who support individuals to get a job.
- Greater practical and financial support is required to enable people with autism to go to college or university.
- People with high functioning autism and Aspergers Syndrome need their specific support needs met.

2.4 The findings of the NAO survey are likely to form a substantial part of the new Autism Bill which is due to be passed later in the year. Under the Autism Bill, the national adult autism strategy, due at the end of this year, will hold local authorities and NHS services legally responsible for providing support for adults with autism and make sure that adults have clear routes to diagnosis, assessment and support. The Autism Bill will have resource implications; however it is unlikely that additional resource will accompany it.

3. National Autistic Society “Think Differently About Autism” Rating

3.1 As a County, Warwickshire rated positively with an “Amber” on systems to accurately record the number of adults and “Green” on having identified Autism Leads and personnel. The “Amber” is a direct result of our improved information systems in transitions allowing us to accurately monitor the number of children and young people with a diagnosis of autism at school and the ability to highlight those who are likely to require support from adult social care.

4. Transition from Children’s to Adults Services

4.1 This is our third presentation to Overview and Scrutiny since March 2008 on this issue. We have, however, made significant progress each time we have

presented to members and this presentation with the new Low Level Support Service will again be a huge leap forward in providing services for a customer group who have traditionally been very difficult to engage.

- 4.2 We have taken steps to identify a pathway for individuals with ASC in the county. We can now give individuals from the age of 13 an indication of what services they are likely to receive if they meet or fail to meet FACS criteria when they reach adult services. Those joining the pathway with mental health needs on top of their autism will still primarily be supported through the county's mental health services where this is the primary need.
- 4.3 As a transitions group we have tried to bring forward decisions over FACS and CHC eligibility to help families and young people plan for their future and be more aware of the level of support they are likely to receive. If individuals have continuing health needs their support is commissioned by the PCT and those with FACS eligible social care needs will have their support delivered through links with the Warwickshire LD team whether they have a learning disability or not.
- 4.4 Diana Sellwood and Simon Veasey continue to work closely to improve the transitions process and this positive work between children's and adults' services has been rewarded with both financial and practical support, including access to an advisor working for the Department of Children, Schools and Families who has joined our County Transitions Group. The County Transitions Group is now aligned to the Learning Disability 'Joined Up Services' sub-group which is tasked with ensuring that the actions contained with the Joint Commissioning Strategy Implementation Plan 2009/10 are achieved and progress is reported to the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

5. ASC Low Level Support Service

- 5.1 The development of a Low Level Support Service for people with high functioning autism has been a major development for a group of customers who have traditionally been denied a service by AHCS through generally not meeting FACS criteria.
- 5.2 Despite not meeting FACS eligibility these individuals and their families do have significant support needs and a logical way of meeting these needs was to re-design an existing vacant PHILLIS Service Broker post to provide hands on support as well as information, advice and guidance. Samantha Burkin was recruited into post in June 2009 and is already having a huge impact on the lives of currently eight individuals across the county, primarily with Aspergers Syndrome. The service broker works flexibly in a person centred way including:
 - Helping to develop strategies to cope with ASC's.
 - Support with planning daily activities and routines.
 - Support to understand and develop each individual's personal social network.
 - Help to reduce anxiety.

- Signposting to other services/agencies.
- Support to access employment, further education or training.
- Checking benefit entitlement and managing money.
- Support to find housing/specialist housing related support.
- Support to set up home/independent living skills.
- Accessing social activities, exercise, health and wellbeing services
- Support to look after or care for somebody with an ASC.
- Referral to Adult Health or Social Care services if required.

5.3 Feedback from people accessing this service is already very positive and the new post has been developed through re-focussing an original PHILLIS service broker vacancy. There has been no additional funding required.

5.4 Referral rates to the service are on the rise despite the fact that the service has not even been advertised yet with many of these referrals coming from local FE colleges or from individuals assessed by the District LD teams and found not to meet FACS criteria. The likelihood is that this post will soon reach capacity and we will need to consider resourcing an additional post to ensure that needs continue to be met once the service becomes better known within the community.

5.5 The service is designed to be as open and easy to access as possible although it cannot:

- Provide a Diagnosis for ASC's
- Provide crisis support (although the Service Broker would work with individuals to put strategies in place to lessen the chance of a crisis)
- Provide direct financial support (although the Service Broker will link with Welfare Rights services/debt advice services)
- Provide Counselling and Therapy.
- Provide Respite Support

Working relationships with the PHILLIS team have been very good and as a team they have increased their knowledge on Autism so they can provide a reliable information service to individuals on the spectrum who use the telephone or email.

5.6 The service is subject to regular review and we have developed a project steering group to help break down some of the barriers such as obtaining an adult diagnosis for an ASC. The first meeting is due to be held in September 2009. Health interest in the project has been good with attendance from a Consultant Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychologist and a specialist behavioural nurse.

6. Work with Schools and Colleges

6.1 Simon Veasey has been liaising with FE colleges in the County around providing information for staff, students on the spectrum and their families. A large proportion of the individuals passing through transitions who do not meet FACS criteria access local FE colleges and make use of the internal learning support. Many of these young people do not have a diagnosis of autism and we are looking at how we can offer various forms of online support

for students and families so that they can pick up information on how to get a diagnosis and refer to the low level support service.

- 6.2 As a result of our contacts Warwickshire College have amended their enrolment forms so that prospective students can now highlight the fact that they have an ASC, this will be very useful in identifying potential need for any future development of the low level support service.
- 6.3 Similar IT information exists for autistic children of school age through the counties "We-Learn" platform.

7. Local and National Networking

- 7.1 We have been looking at the issue of ASC across Coventry and Warwickshire with Mike Murkin Social Care Lead for Mental Health, Coventry City Council and Zandrea Mays Service Manager Learning Disabilities, Coventry City Council and some initial work was started by Strategic Commissioning to look at a number of Sub-Regional strands of work including Solihull, services for individuals with ASC were on the agenda.
- 7.2 Through our positive contacts with the National Transition Support Team Simon Veasey and Diana Sellwood have been asked to speak and run a workshop on Autism and Transition at the National Audit Office's National Autism Conference in London in October.

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August 2009