



Autism Strategy

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Definition of Autism

Autism is unlike other conditions located within the fields of mental health or learning disability:

- People are born with Autism and have it for life.
- The aim is management/development of coping skills as opposed to treatment or cure.
- Autism is known as a spectrum condition because of the range of difficulties it causes. The range goes from mild to severe.

■ CBC uses nationally recognised and agreed definitions.

Specialist Support: Main Difficulties

- Agreed definition: “A lifelong condition that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to other people. It also affects how a person makes sense of the world around them” (agreed by National Autistic Society).
- Many people with Autism live with minimal “specialist” support, whilst others need a lifetime of services to maximise independence, choice and control.
- Main difficulties can be; social communication, social interaction, social imagination. People with autism may experience heightened or reduced sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colour. They are often people who prefer a routine and find it hard to cope with change. LD dyspraxia and or hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are often associated conditions.

Autism Steering Group

Set up in 2010, membership included:

- Service User representation.
- Carer Representative.
- Autism Bedfordshire.
- Representatives from each local authority, NHS Bedfordshire and SEPT.
- Link Representative.

Key Joint Strategic Objectives

Workshops held in 2010 agreed:

1. Increase awareness and understanding of autism among frontline staff across the whole community.
2. Develop a clear consistent pathway for diagnosis in every area, which will be followed by the offer of a personalised needs assessment and considerations for appropriate community services.
3. Plan in relation to the provision of services to people with autism in transitions.
4. Enable local partners to plan and develop appropriate services for adults with autism to meet identified needs and priorities.
5. Help adults with autism with work.

Autism Strategy

Following the workshops a draft local strategy was produced:

“Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives In Central Bedfordshire Autism Strategy For Central Bedfordshire”

- This went through the ratification process, and was finally agreed by HCOP in December 2011.
- Formal launch in January 2012 (over 100 people at each session) .

Strategy Objectives

Development of a local diagnostic centre:

- We are developing a clear consistent pathway for diagnosis in every area, followed by a personalised needs assessment and considerations for appropriate community services.
- Within Central Bedfordshire Council, people with a learning disability can currently be assessed within the specialist learning disability service, but people with Asperger's syndrome need to go out of area for an assessment. This is not acceptable.
- Within Central Bedfordshire Council, a pathway that enables people to get a diagnosis locally which triggers a pathway of support and sign posting is to be developed. This is national best practice to develop services close to home and secure value for money.

Actions to date

1. Fact finding visit to Bristol autism partnership service in February 2012 and good practice shared with NHS Bedfordshire, SEPT and the three local authorities.
2. Draft Service Specification has been drawn up by NHS Bedfordshire in partnership with local authorities and draft has been shared with SEPT. Planning meeting being arranged for April 2012 to agree implementation timetable.
3. Notice being served by NHS Bedfordshire on current contract with the Maudlesy Hospital to release funding for local service.
4. Job Descriptions for SEPT Diagnostic service to be finalised and agreed.

What happens now?

Inaugural meeting of the Autism Partnership Delivery Board held on the 7th March 2012.

- Board members were invited to contribute to the implementation process for the diagnostic service.
- Considerable support was expressed by those present at the Partnership Board for establishing a local diagnostic centre and pathway.
- Work streams (e.g. employment and transition planning) in place following the successful launch of the strategy

Local Diagnostic Service to be commissioned and operational by September 2012.

Action Plan: Accountably & Governance

- Implementation Group (presenting group reports to partnership board).
- Agreed action plan.
- Partnership Group.
- LD and MH Partnership Boards.
- HCOP.
- Terms of Reference Agreed.
- Reporting specific targets and outcomes, for employment, transition planning and training & development.