

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting, Thursday 13 September 2018

Liberal Democrat Motion on Autism Awareness

To be proposed by Councillor Tim Ball

Council notes:

1. Around 700,000 people in the UK are on the autism spectrum. That is more than 1 in 100. If you include families, autism is part of daily life for 2.8 million people. In addition many are still undiagnosed.
2. Autism is a hidden disability – you cannot always tell if someone is autistic. The right support at the right time can make an enormous difference to people’s lives. 17% of autistic children have been suspended from school. 70% of adults say they are not getting the help they need from social services and that with more support they would feel less isolated. At least one in three experiences severe mental health difficulties due to lack of support. Only 32% are in some kind of paid work.
3. Public awareness of autism is growing but many people are unaware of the challenges faced by people on the autism spectrum and their families.
4. Thousands of children are undiagnosed until later in life, and many adults have suffered from lack of diagnosis and the right understanding and support for much of their life. Many end up in our prison systems or are homeless. Many have never had the right support or opportunity to be employed. Children need to be assessed early and, if autism is suspected, get the right support in a timely way. This currently does not happen, leaving families unable to get the help and support required to enable the young people to understand their condition and reach their potential and for families and teachers to make the necessary adaptations to support them.
5. The efforts made by local organisations and businesses, such as the Roman Baths, which has been recognised by the Autism Society, and the introduction of ‘quiet shopping hours’ in supermarkets are welcomed. But it should go much further.

Council resolves to:

6. Encourage our partners in Virgin Care and CAMHS to diagnose autism as early as possible to ensure that help and training available are to all people diagnosed with autism and their families in order to ensure that they are best able to cope with their condition.
7. Request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Minister concerned to ensure that autism is recognised in our criminal justice system.
8. Consider carrying out an audit of Bath and North East Somerset Council services for autistic people to ensure that they are easily understood and are fit for purpose. Encourage organisations and companies in Bath and North East Somerset to include autism awareness in their training programmes if they do not already do so, particularly for members of staff who deal directly with members of the public.

9. Request that all public-facing Council departments ensure that Bath and North East Somerset Council acts as a best practice exemplar when working with people with Autism.
10. Encourage our partners in the CCG to ensure that the Autism Partnership meets regularly and works to make concrete improvements to the lives of autistic people and those working with them and supporting them.
11. Ensure we are compliant with the requirements of the Autism Act statutory guidance, March 2015.
12. Consider supporting the 'Too Much Information' Autism Hour in its own premises (6 – 13 October 2018).