

MEETING	B&NES HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
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TYPE	An open public item

<u>Report summary table</u>	
Report title	Autism Strategy Update
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List of attachments	Appendix 1 - Terms of Reference for the Autism Partnership Appendix 2 & 3 - Flowcharts showing Autism Diagnostic and Post diagnostic pathway Appendix 4 - Snapshot of local needs profile and trends Appendix 5 & 6 Tables showing services for autistic people, families and carers in B&NES
Background papers	None
Summary	This paper updates members of the Health and Wellbeing Board on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The re- establishment of a B&NES wide, all-age (children's and adults) Autism Partnership and progress made since the last update to the Board. • Outline work taking place at a locality level in B&NES to review and update the B&NES Autism Strategy and improve local provision. • Highlight the work planned across the B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG footprint through the Learning Disability and Autism Transformation Board.
Recommendations	The Board is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the content of this paper and progress made in many areas since the last report to the Board in January 2019 • Make any recommendations to further the development of the B&NES Autism Strategy and its implementation • Consider the proposal to adopt the Ambassadors for Autism Scheme in B&NES
Rationale for recommendations	The recommendations of this report contribute to the Health and Wellbeing Board's following aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve support for families with complex needs • Improve support for people with long term conditions • Promote mental wellbeing and support recovery

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve skills and employment • Take action on loneliness
Resource implications	None identified at this stage
Statutory considerations	<p>1.1 The Autism Act (2009). This places a statutory requirement on the Government to produce an Autism Strategy and associated Statutory Guidance for local authorities and NHS Bodies (CCGs).</p> <p>1.2 The NHS Long Term Plan 2019 which sets out a number of priorities for local CCG areas, for instance preventing hospital admission</p> <p>1.3 NICE Autism Quality Standard (QS51) January 2014</p> <p>1.4 The Care Act 2014</p>
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Autism friendly and inclusive community makes it easier for autistic people and their families/carers to participate and make a contribution to the climate change emergency and carbon reduction on both an individual and collective level, for instance making use of public transport. • Commissioning and publicising services that are local to where people live reduces the need to travel long distances on private transport.
Consultation	Members of the Autism Partnership Group are fully engaged in the development of the underpinning principles and values, the emerging priorities and development of the strategy and have been consulted on the contents of this report.
Risk management	A risk assessment related to the issues addressed in this paper and recommendations has been undertaken. This is in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

THE REPORT

1. **Coronavirus Pandemic – update for the HWB June meeting**

The Specialist Commissioning Team convenes the Autism Partnership Group (APG) and is leading on strategy development. Since early March its attention has been focused on the Pandemic, including working with providers and partners to ensure autistic people (and others with support needs), continue to be well supported. It is now beginning to consider how it re-starts its business as usual, including arrangements for continued and increased involvement of autistic people, their families and carers in the APG and the Autism Strategy. In the meantime, local autism services have adapted to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable:

- Community based services including the Virgin Care Autistic Spectrum Conditions Team, the Supported Living Service, Henrietta Street (Julian House), and the Bath Mind Autism services have been adapting to the situation and continue to operate safely within PHE guidelines. Teams have kept in touch with service users via regular phone calls and virtual meetings. Some people are really missing their routines and usual activities and additional support has been commissioned for people's whose needs have increased due to a change in routine etc. Others have responded really well to the new ways of working virtually and the sector as a whole is working together to ensure that we capture and further develop some of the innovative working that has arisen from the pandemic. Commissioners have worked closely with services to provide continued quality assurance and up to date risk assessments at an individual, service and system level. Day services/groups are now getting ready to re-start, albeit with adaptations to ensure infection control measures are in place, and arrangements are compliant with PHE advice.
- Bath MIND is reporting an increase in calls from autistic people who are experiencing increased anxiety and mental health issues and an increase in complexity. This is also being reported nationally
- Across the BSW footprint and at a locality level, we are continuing to map risks and plan the restart and recovery work. In particular, we are expecting a surge in demand related to increased mental health needs
- **Children's diagnostic service**
The Children's Speech and Language Therapy ASD team have been contacting families that are on the waiting list for an assessment (ADOS) by telephone. We are taking an Autism developmental history and gathering information about the CYP's current presentation, strengths and needs. Where appropriate families can be offered the 3di assessment over the telephone to support a diagnostic decision. We are also making contact with schools to gather further information from relevant staff to contribute to the autism assessment. The SLT ASD team have held 'virtual' team meetings with the Community Paediatricians in order to discuss current cases and to co-ordinate service delivery. At this time, we have not offered any face to face assessments with CYP but are beginning to consider a 'recovery' plan for when we offer appointments
- **Adult diagnostic/post diagnostic support service**
The BASS service has been offering virtual support groups via video conferencing in place of the usual face to face groups. Covering topics including Mindfulness, Problem solving and Post diagnostic support, many people have responded very positively to these virtual groups, with some preferring them to 'face to face' contact. One to one

phone support has been available for those who need it. BASS has seen an increase in levels of anxiety across their client group and for people affected by OCD, Covid-19 has presented particular challenges which BASS has been supporting them with.

The diagnostic service is now planning to re-start, making use of the video conferencing platform 'Attend Anywhere' and virtual appointments wherever appropriate. BASS practitioners are unsure whether face to face appointments may still be required to complete diagnoses and commissioners are working with the service to support the re-opening of the waiting list for diagnoses which has been temporarily closed. The service continues to make itself available to provide advice and support to other professionals working with autistic people at this difficult time.

2. National Context

2.1 **The Autism Act 2009** placed statutory requirements on the Government to publish an adult autism strategy and associated statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS bodies for meeting the needs of autistic adults in England. It was the first, and remains the only, disability-specific piece of legislation. The strategy **Fulfilling and rewarding lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England** focused on five core areas of activity:

- increasing awareness and understanding of autism among frontline professionals;
- developing a clear, consistent pathway for diagnosis in every area, which is followed by the offer of a personalised needs assessment;
- improving access for autistic adults to the services and support they need to live independently within the community;
- helping autistic adults into work;
- enabling local partners to plan and develop appropriate services for autistic adults to meet identified needs and priorities.

2.2 Government Review of the Autism Strategy

The Government is now undertaking a comprehensive review of the autism strategy and will be extending it to include children and young people for the first time. A consultation was launched in March 2019, and the Government is due to publish its response. The revised strategy was originally due to be published towards the end of 2019, however no update has yet been given for an expected publication date.

2.3 In December 2010 the Department of Health published statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations. The statutory guidance and national strategy have been reviewed and updated periodically in subsequent years. Since 2013, the Department of Health and Social Care has asked each local authority to complete a bi-annual Self -Assessment, to enable local strategy groups to review their current progress in the implementation of the Autism Strategy locally and to identify future priorities and plan in partnership with health partners, other key organisations and local autistic people and their families.

2.4 The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) provides several objectives for people with autism as part of its Transforming Care agenda. This includes;

- The introduction of a 'digital flag' in the patient record by 2023/24, to ensure staff know a patient has autism.
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are made so that wider NHS services can support people with learning disabilities or autism;
- Piloting the introduction of a specific health check for people with autism.
- Tackling preventable deaths of people with a learning disability and autism
- Improving diagnostic timeframes
- Increasing the use of personal health budgets
- Increasing investment in intensive, crisis and forensic community support
- The most recent target, as detailed in the NHS Long Term Plan, is for a reduction in inpatient provision of 50% (compared to 2015 levels) by 2023/24. The Government has also committed to introducing mandatory training on learning disabilities and autism for health and social care staff. Trials will begin in health and social care settings by April 2020, and report by March 2021, after which wider roll-out of training is expected for all staff.

3. Local context

3.1 A report on the outcome of the B&NES bi-annual self – assessment was provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2019. This outlined the progress made locally in implementing the national Autism Strategy along with areas still requiring improvement and priorities for the future commissioning and provision of services for both children and autistic adults.

3.2 The priorities identified in this paper for improvement included:

- Urgent need to re-establish an Autism Partnership Board to develop and deliver local strategy in line with national guidance
- Further work to reduce the waiting times for an assessment in line with NICE guidance
- Greater engagement with people with autism of all ages and their families/carers
- Continued work to promote reasonable adjustments for people with autism in service areas including within health and social care
- Clarification of mental health pathways for autistic adults who do not have a learning disability including those subject to detention under the Mental Health Act

3.3 Progress has been made against these priorities as follows:

Autism Partnership Board

- The Autism Partnership Board was re-established in July last year (2019), and has had three board meetings to date. It is an all age board covering both autistic children and adults. These are well attended by a broad range of agencies and organisations from across B&NES, including the universities, statutory and non-statutory health and social care providers as well as a number of autistic people and carers and families. There is strong engagement in developing the new strategy and action plan, and it is gaining traction with the implementation of key priorities. Subsequent meetings will be held every 4 months. The Terms of Reference which include details of membership are included as Appendix 1.

Reducing waiting times

- Further work has taken place by the locally commissioned provider of the autism assessment and diagnostic service for adults, Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (BASS). In 2019 BASS introduced a screening clinic to triage assessments in order to reduce waiting times. This development has resulted in a reduction in waiting times to the NICE recommended waiting time of 3 months.
- Between April and December 2019, the service received 113 referrals and conducted 88 diagnostic assessments. Just over half the referrals were for women. 21 of those assessed (24%) resulted in a positive diagnosis of autism.
- The BaNES paediatric ASD assessment pathway is Community Paediatrician led (some complex cases are assessed by CAMHS). Initial appointments are offered within 8 weeks of receipt of referral. Waiting times for specialist assessment (ADOS) by the Children's Speech and Language team (SLT) are currently 6-9 months, although usually less for preschool children.
- A review of the diagnostic and post diagnostic pathway is currently being conducted. Particular attention is being given to the arrangements for children transitioning to adult services. The review aims to clarify the pathways, explain the process in a clear and easy to understand way, and to identify areas for improvement. One output of the review that has been requested and is being finalised is a simple flowchart diagram of the assessment and diagnostic process. (see Appendix 2 & 3 for draft flowcharts)

Active engagement with autistic people, their families and carers.

- A small number of autistic people and their families and carers attend and are engaged in the work being delivered by the Autism Partnership Board and family / carer representatives attend the SEND partnership Board. Wider engagement and consultation is planned around the delivery of priorities and the draft B&NES Autism Strategy and action plan.
- Children, young people and their families are actively engaged in the review, redesign and recommissioning of the ASD outreach service for children and young people and this will be replicated in the commissioning of new adult services.

Promote reasonable adjustments for people with autism in service areas including within health and social care

- Training has been delivered in B&NES this year to a wide range of services/agencies including Job Centre Plus/DWP, Police Custody, Bath University, AWP, CAMHS, Bath Mind, B&NES Council, Virgin care, The American Museum and RUH. Training is planned for Hillview Lodge; the acute Mental Health Ward in B&NES and we will work with the GP commissioner to promote the uptake of Autism Awareness training across GP surgeries. In addition, a bid was made and agreed for additional funding from NHSE by the B&NES, Swindon Wiltshire CCGs for further awareness training in key service areas all three CCGs. This will be rolled out early this year.
- Nationally, the Government has committed £1.4 million to develop and test a learning disability and autism training package. A trial of the training is due to begin in April 2020 and will report by March 2021, after which wider roll-out to all staff is expected.

The February Autism Partnership Board included a presentation by Dr Jade Norris, (University of Bath Centre for Applied Autism Research (CAAR)), on the

Ambassadors for Autism Scheme. This scheme supports employers and service providers to pledge to become Ambassadors for Autism by making adaptations by modifying communication, adapting the environment and providing information and materials in different formats. Ambassadors work with the CAAR to create their pledge and receive a certificate and continued support. Several agencies expressed an interest in taking this scheme forward locally and the ambition is for it to be adopted by client facing teams in B&NES.

Clarification of mental health pathways for autistic adults

- Work is underway to improve access and pathways into Mental Health services. A Joint Working Protocol for people with more complex needs which cross professional boundaries is in development locally in B&NES. This involves key partners including Virgin Adult Social Care, AWP, BASS, Housing Services, the Drug and Alcohol Services, Police and Commissioners. The intention is to agree respective roles and the joint working arrangements for people with complex needs to ensure they are supported jointly.

4. The B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Operating Plan

- 4.1 The BSW operating plan has 3 priorities, one of which is transforming care for people with a Learning disability and Autism. A B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire All Age Learning Disability Transformation Board is being established which will meet 6 weekly. The purpose of the Board will be to develop sustainable and effective system-wide service improvements and initiatives with a focus on Transforming Care for those with more complex health and care needs identified in the NHS long term plan.
- 4.2 Priorities include:
- complete needs assessment and map services for each area to identify overarching gaps. Workshops are planned in each locality to map services and pathways. The B&NES workshop planned to take place mid -March was postponed.
 - Supporting primary care networks to improve and increase uptake in annual health checks
 - Reduction in Out of Area placement numbers by co-creating options for BSW provision of early intervention, prevention and crisis support services

5. Needs profile and trends

- 5.1 As part of our strategic commissioning role, work is currently taking place to assess needs and map all services, (including services in the community that B&NES hasn't commissioned). This will enable us to measure and predict future demand and from that, to understand where there are gaps in provision and how best to fill them within our resources. Early indications suggest we require additional capacity in respite services, more training flats for young people in transition, and additional supported living, housing options and community-based support for autistic young people who may have additional support needs around their emotional and mental health. This strategic commissioning work is still in progress. National data and trends will be factored into our strategic needs assessment. This suggests that the number of autistic people nationally is predicted to increase in the next ten years:

- National prevalence of autism is estimated to be around 116 per 10,000 of population. This suggests that there are 1635 people living in B&NES with an autistic spectrum condition. (18-64 years) source - PANSI and POPPI
- We expect to see these numbers increasing by 8% by 2030. Source - PANSI and POPPI (18-64 years)

More analysis is required to update our strategic needs assessment with reference to autism. See Appendix 4 for current snapshot information/data relating to children and adult services.

6. Locally commissioned services for children and young people in B&NES

- The Local Authority delivers an **Education Inclusion Service** to oversee its statutory responsibilities for children missing education and children with SEND. The service ensures all children have access to a school place and oversees the council responsibilities for delivering Education Health & Care Plans to deliver resources to support children's additional needs in schools. The service works within its resources to promote inclusion in schools for all children. The Local Authority commissions additional services to ensure children can access their education; this includes a speech and language therapy outreach service to primary and secondary schools providing specialist assessment of social communication difficulties to inform the diagnosis of ASC, and liaison with school staff and parents
- a. and a service for children with sensory support needs. The SEND Strategy group oversees services for children with SEND to promote good practice and access to services.
- b. **Autism Outreach Support Service**
B&NES commissions an Autism Outreach Support Service which provides training, advice, and support to early year's settings, schools, colleges and families. It also provides some direct, specialist intervention with individual children and families following a diagnosis of autism. This support is essential in ensuring that children with autism are able to sustain their school placements and are supported to achieve and thrive. Following a B&NES- wide consultation and review of the service, the Council proceeded to commission a new service. The contract for the new service has been awarded to Fosse Way School, and the new service will start on 1st September 2020.

See Appendix 5 for further information about the range of services available for autistic children and young people in B&NES

7. Locally commissioned services for autistic adults in B&NES

- a. **Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (BASS).** This service is commissioned from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust (AWP) to provide training and a specialist assessment, diagnostic and post diagnostic support service for autistic adults in B&NES. The BASS service also provides a weekly advice service, with one to one appointments to offer support on a range of issues such as: housing, education and training, job coaching, relationships, managing emotions and signposting to other services, and a social links workshop that is designed to provide a space where

people with autism can meet to explore different resources that make meeting and interacting with new people easier and what other social and community opportunities are available locally. The Virgin Care Autism service attends on a monthly basis and is on hand to give advice and information regarding Care Act eligibility. Negotiations are currently taking place with a commissioned provider to attend on a monthly basis to provide advice and support regarding welfare benefits including Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

- b. Virgin Care and Health provides the delegated Care Act Assessment and Support Planning (Social Work) functions on behalf of the council. This includes a small team specifically for people on the autistic spectrum. The team identifies what services or support is required in order to meet eligible need including the setting up of direct payments. The teams can also offer advice and guidance on issues around benefits, housing, employment, education and training and signposting to other services BSW priorities for LD and Autism.
- c. A number of housing, care and support services are currently commissioned or purchased by individuals through their direct payments. This includes:
 - a short-term accommodation-based service for eight people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions in particular Asperger's Syndrome living in the centre of Bath. As a short-term accommodation service, the service is designed to support people for up to two years to develop their independent living skills and enable them to move on into their own properties and live safely and independently in the community. The service has been successful in moving people on into their own homes and has established strong partnerships with the Housing, employment and other local Autism services.
 - Bath and North East Somerset also commissions an outreach service from Julian House who are the support provider at Henrietta Street, the outreach service is in place to support the individuals moving on from Henrietta Street into further independence. The service is provided for a time limited transition period to provide support such as setting up utility bills, applying for benefits and tenancy support. This service has been put in place to ease transition from a supported living service into further independence and provide continuity of support over this period of transition.
 - Dimensions – Willow Bank – 6 self-contained flats with onsite care and support
 - Dimensions Cranbrook – 6 self-contained flats with onsite care and support
 - Bath Mind – community outreach specifically for autistic people
- d. Employment Support is available, this includes Project SEARCH, an employability programme based at Bath and North East Somerset Council, which helps young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to gain the skills they need to become employed. It is a programme of work-based experience, which sees a Business (in our case the Council) team up with an Educator (Bath College) and Supported Employment provider (Virgin Care) to run the programme. It provides a mixture of structured work placements and classroom learning and it all happens in the

workplace. The aim is paid employment (with any business) for young people at the end of their yearlong programme. For further information see:
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/skills-and-local-employment/Ways-Into-Work/project-search>

Additional employment support for people with disabilities including autism in B&NES is being funded by WECA and the detail of how this will be delivered is currently being developed. The scheme will be open to autistic people who require employment support.

See Appendix 6 for further information about the range of services available for autistic people in B&NES

8. Emerging Priorities

The Autism Partnership Board has identified the following priorities.

- **Priority 1 – Joined up commissioning and delivery**
 - Health, education and social care working better together to deliver more effective, joined up care
 - Children and Adult services working better together to deliver more effective, (all age) joined up care and better planned and supported transitions.
 - A better understanding of current and future needs
 - Better health and wellbeing
 - Meaningful engagement and consultation in the commissioning process
- **Priority 2 – Improving access to diagnosis and post diagnosis support**
 - Diagnostic and post diagnostic pathways for children and adults are clear, accessible and easy to understand People are able to access diagnostic services within timescales required under the NICE guidelines
 - Diagnoses are delivered in a timely way
 - A range of information, advice and support services is available and easily accessible for people with autism, their families and carers in B&NES
 - Improved access to mental health and therapeutic services
- **Priority 3 – Getting the right support at the right time**
 - Education, learning, employment, volunteering, and training
 - Relationships
 - Housing including supported living and access to mainstream housing
 - Life transitions
 - Support for carers
- **Priority 4 – Increasing awareness and understanding of autism across the whole community**
 - Community acceptance and awareness of autism leading to enhanced social inclusion
 - Being safe in the community
 - Awareness and training in services, for professionals and the community
 - Information, signposting, advice, advocacy and training.

9. Timescale for new strategy and action plan consultation and approval/ next steps

- Draft All-age Autism Strategy and Action Plan to go out to consultation in October 2020
- Final draft to be presented for sign off in December 2020
- The Action Plan will be a dynamic document – progress will be reported to and monitored by the Autism Partnership

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