

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Health Select Commission
2.	Date:	12th July 2012
3.	Title:	Autism Spectrum Conditions - Update
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

This paper describes the recent work of the Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) Strategy Group in Rotherham's Children and Young People's Service. It reflects their commitment to:

- Recognise the complexity of the autism spectrum.
- Develop the services that work to help young people with ASC to support and remain close to their families and local community.
- Develop resource and provision to meet the needs of children and young people who experience ASC.
- Develop the understanding of 'Personalisation, Pupil Progress and Mainstreaming'.
- Engage with families and children with ASC to produce outcomes reflecting corporate agenda.
- Develop monitoring and quality control mechanisms to ensure value for money.

The purpose of the work is to raise the attainment of all Rotherham's children and young people.

6. Recommendations

That the Health Select Commission notes the activities undertaken to address issues raise and improve services.

The following are the main recommendations:

1. That the report be received and its contents noted.
2. The further work take place on:
 - Closer alignment with Health in an attempt to achieve increased compatibility with CYPS/Health records.
 - Work to review and monitor the Identification, Assessment and Intervention Plans relating to Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).
 - Revisit the eligibility criteria for the Children's Disability Team and Adult Services.

- Contribute to the ASC Scrutiny Review that is planned to recommence shortly.
- Increasing school/college staff knowledge of the Autism Spectrum Condition.
- Link the Children Services' Policy to the Adults with Autism Plan with regard to transition and Adult Services.
- Ensure Value for Money and the link to Dedicated Schools Grant expenditure.
- Roll out the Parent and Child Charter across the town's schools and services.
- Develop the targeted work around Demand Avoidance.

3. That a further report be submitted to the Cabinet.

7. Proposals and Details

Rotherham Council has made a vast difference to the children and young people who experience ASC. There has been a thoughtful and planned response taking into account the competing needs on the community response. A number of officers over the years have carefully planned the strategic and operational response to support children and young people who experience Autism Spectrum Condition.

In the seven decades since autism was categorised the results of research and clinical work have led to the broadening range of the autistic spectrum from the profound austerity of severe autism, to the subtle communication difficulties found in aspects of Asperger's Syndrome.

Children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition have impairments in social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication and imagination, this is often labelled 'the triad of impairment'. These traits are often accompanied by a narrow range of interests, activities and behaviour patterns which are often pursued rigidly sometimes to a point of obsession.

Often described as the invisible disability, autism is a complex lifelong developmental impairment; the range of autistic conditions is diverse and remains largely misunderstood. There has been some excellent work in Rotherham on the inclusion of children with ASC in their local mainstream school.

The Autism Strategy Group defines its work in four broad areas of activity:

- Services and Provision around ASC.
- Continued Professional Development.
- Diagnosis and Assessment Procedures.
- Involvement and Parents/Childs Voice and Influence.

The purpose of this work is to raise the attainment and improve life long experiences of children and young people with ASC. In order to do this effectively we must listen to the children and families and ensure their voice has influence on policy.

The Autism Strategy Group meets on a termly basis and receives information on previously commissioned work from each of the four major subgroups.

Recent work has highlighted a number of issues (June 2012):

- We have a number of children and young people with a diagnosis of ASC. At the moment approximately 1:60 in the 0-19 age range have a diagnosis and this is well above the regional and national range (1246 as at June 2012). This is a key area for further discussion.
- The families in Rotherham told us the following:
 - a. We need to do more to support families and children at home. This should include the development of an agreed entitlement for children and families following a diagnosis.
 - b. Our schools are not always well enough informed re ASC. We should pursue the Autism Friendly Schools Award, increase the practical and physical support to establish ASC friendly rooms and enable teaching staff in our schools. This would be an opportunity to use the expertise and resources in the SEN Special School Sector.
 - c. We need to develop trust and confidence at times of transition:
 - Entry to School/Early Years Settings
 - Foundation – Year 1
 - Year 6 – Year 7
 - Year 11 – Year 13
 - Year 14 - College
- Schools need additional support to develop teaching skills and learning objectives. 'Across the Board' practices in schools should be adapted regarding display, storage issues and the use of software to produce a range of communication symbols.
- All strategic developments relating to services for ASC children and families should be in greater partnership.
- The ASC Strategy Group has a clear remit and established terms of reference within the DfE response to the Green Paper.
- The policy of children's services and adult services relating to ASC should be closer aligned.

During the year the ASC Strategy Group have focused on the following activities to improve services that I would like to draw to your attention:

- Development of closer links with National Autistic Society – Local/National activity.
- Significant impact by Head Teacher of Milton to Kilnhurst & Swinton Resources.
- Discussions have taken place re a Joint Venture: Milton – Swinton – Dearne Valley College : re Post-16 provision.

- Identification of pressure point re Young Persons Learning Agency and Freeman College – requests for specialist placement.
- Discussions with The Robert Ogden School re Person Centred Reviews/Review processes.
- Commentary on the NICE guidelines re Autism.
- Multi agency launch of “Think Autism” and drop-in sessions for parents.
- Published the “Need to Know” Campaign – Autism/Mental Health.
- Autism Communication Team has been involved in the DSG Value for Money review.
- Members Scrutiny review re-launched.
- Adult Services have prepared a paper on Adults with Autism that has been discussed with Children’s Services.
- Continuation of the Chat & Chill Youth Club.
- Use of Aiming High to enhance short break facilities for Children and Young People who experience ASC.
- Greater understanding of ASC with children and young people who are looked after by the Local Authority.
- Project work around Pathological Demand Avoidance continues.

8. Finance

There are at this stage no new financial demands being highlighted.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

We must continue to improve our knowledge and understanding of ASC, listen to parents, carers and the young people themselves. It is vital to link the developments around ASC to Aiming High for Disabled Children, Transitions to Adulthood, Early Intervention and Positive Outcomes for Pupils. This will result in our children achieving their potential.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There is a need to support the children, young people and their families around the disability of Autism Spectrum Condition. As a community we have to ensure that we continue to develop our strategic thinking and appropriate use of resources to this local demand. We must ensure that the work undertaken has critical value and impacts on our community, to this end we must continue to place Autism as a priority of the work of both the Children and Young People’s Service and the delivery of an integrated CAMHS Strategy.

It is also important to ensure that the policy and practice of Children and Young People’s Service is aligned with that of the Adult Services.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

This paper draws from the ASC papers taken to Members in April 2009, June 2010 and October 2011.

Contact Name: Steve Mulligan
Principal Educational Psychologist

Email: steve.mulligan@rotherham.gov.uk

Telephone: 01709 822579