

The need for an ongoing Autism Strategy

a -c)

We recognise that current arrangements for improving autism services are needed as they provide a national steer which we can model our local provision on.

- The national steer helps to promote regional working which is of benefit to Swansea Council.
- We, in Swansea, have worked to the national autism strategy for a number of years and continue to welcome guidance from a national perspective.
- The Health Social Care and Wellbeing Act (2014) provides a legislative framework for supporting children, adults and families with a variety of needs including autism.

d)

Consultation around the revised national autism strategy took place in Swansea in 2016, this was done without a legislative requirement. However, we appreciate this type of consultation may not have taken place elsewhere.

e)

We believe that a national autism strategy should be reviewed and updated due to changing population needs, needing to review data available and any diagnostic changes. A three yearly review would be of benefit.

f)

We agree that the Welsh Government should have a role in monitoring progress made in supporting autistic people and their families. The role could be to collate data and consult service users in order to help inform future planning.

Clarity on pathways to diagnosis

g)

- i) In Swansea there has been an established pathway based on a school graduated response for a number of years. This has been updated in line with the standards set out by the Together for Children and Young People

agenda, ensuring we are adhering to the All Wales Neurodevelopment Pathway.

- ii) Although we acknowledge that referrers may occasionally feel that it is not easy to access a diagnostic assessment, we believe that there needs to be a strong evidence base in order to proceed with a diagnostic assessment as it is a rigorous process which will impact on the child and involves considerable clinician's time.
 - i) Diagnostic Pathways for children and adults should be published and available to all. Locally, the ND Pathway for children and young people is due to be launched in November 2017 and will be published in the form of a referral pack.
- The Integrated Autism Service is being develop across ABMU. It is envisaged that this will be starting Spring 2018. The ABMU IAS is committed to make public the diagnostic pathway for adults once established.

Delivery of Services

j)

- i) We monitor the sufficiency of local service provision through the local ASD steering group which comprises representatives from Health, Social services, Education, Third Sector and Parents/Carers.
- ii) From an education perspective, the demand for specialist ASD placements has recently outstripped provision. This has been recognised and additional specific ASD provision for primary and secondary phases of education is due to be opened in January 2018.
- iv) Locally we recognise the importance of the Third sector and community based providers and work collaboratively with these in order to expand provision.

k)

There are already overarching statutory guidances that require the local authority to provide services to meet the need of families where there is a disabled child. Autism would fall under these requirements and therefore may not need a discrete statutory guidance.

l)

It would be of benefit to have a national steer with regard to data collection. This will also allow regional comparisons to be made.

Training

n/o)

We have welcomed and made good use of the training provided on the ASDInfo Website. The information cited on this website has provided a consistent approach to training across many different professions and environments.

Employment

p)

We work in partnership with local agencies to improve the rates of employment for people with autism.

Definition of autism

q)

There may be changes in terminology around autism as diagnostic manuals are updated. Any definition would need to reflect changing terminology therefore be subject to change.

Unintended consequences

r)

A Bill for autism could lead to the expectation for Bills for other specific disabilities.

Costs

t)

iii) iv) We envisage that there may be some additional costs in both data collection and training, depending on the directive from the Bill.

v) The factors which could be measured as part of a cost-benefit analysis could include;

- A reduction in specialist Out of County placements for children and young people with ASD.

- A reduction in the number of Looked After Children.
- An increase in the number of autistic adults in employment.

Savings

w)

Please see response to 32(v).

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