

Our son is now 27 years old and holds a first BA hons degree as well as recently attaining his Masters degree. We are very proud of him. We have had many years of fighting for the right support from a very early age – our son's condition was apparent very early although correct ASD diagnosis wasn't made until he was 10 and then only through the private route. So, as well as many others we feel that the system is not set up to help and support these children and their families and we are sure that other parents/carers will say the same.

However, now that our son is an adult, the support situation is unbelievably worse. Social services are ill- equipped to deal with autism especially in it's many variant forms.

Our son is eminently intelligent and highly academic, however he struggles to operate a microwave or tumble drier without his visual aids provided by a specialist Autism Occupational Therapist (but more on that). This is where he does not fit into the current social services structure as he neither fits into learning disabilities (because it is assumed he has an IQ of over 70) nor really the adult services of social services. Here the social workers have a caseload of mostly elderly persons and so there is a distinct lack of specialist services to support our son appropriately. They really do not know what to do with him. We recently moved and were naive enough to assume that his case would be automatically passed through to our new social services.....

but no, we had to start the process of referral/assessment all over again. We do not receive any support from the NHS at all now and have to pay privately for speech and language sessions. At our previous address in RCT they had set up a specialist Autism Occupational health service which was a huge support and benefit – but then again it is the post code lottery because in our new county this service is unheard of.

So we would like to see clear case ownership and accountability with a consistent package of services (looking at and engaging in best

practices) that can be delivered, continuing through adulthood instead of assuming that autistic people 'get better' at 18. This is a lifelong condition and it should be treated and supported as such by the various interventions. There needs to be clear deliverables and measures in place to uphold this process.

We would welcome more specialist Social workers trained in Autism and how to help autistic people to fulfil their potential and become valuable members of the community and workforce where possible.

Specialist Careers services should not have a age cut-off – ASD people often take longer to achieve their goals and that needs to be accounted for. Specialist support workers trained in autism would also be hugely beneficial. Parents and carers of ASD adults (in our experience) are currently very much left to their own devices. So it is a frightening prospect for us now for the inevitable time when we are unable to provide that level of care for our son.