

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Services Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	13 February 2014
TITLE OF ITEM	Autism
CABINET MEMBER	R. H. Wyn Williams

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.

Autism is a spectrum condition, which means that, whilst all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and some need specialist support.

Services for Children on the Autistic Spectrum

- Work for children with autism is initially led by Clinical Psychologists in the Integrated Team for Disabled Children, Derwen.
- Following an assessment it is possible that a referral will be made to the nursing service, social worker or respite / support service within the team.
- Specialist services are provided within the Education Department for a number of children on the autistic spectrum.
- The Clinical Psychologists received 62 referrals between April and December 2013 for an ASD assessment.
- Due to lack of capacity in the Clinical Psychology Team there is a waiting list of up to a year in some cases.
- There are 38 children under six years old and 23 children between six and nine years old on the waiting list for an ASD assessment.
- There are children who have already been assessed and given a diagnosis on the waiting list for further intervention.
- With grant support, including Autism, Cymorth and Families First Grants, some preventative work is provided by offering specialist intervention such as PACT, music therapy intervention and sleep intervention.
- Without these grants, on the whole, only an assessment and diagnosis service would be available.
- Challenging behaviour intervention is provided which takes more time and is more expensive therefore the grant intervention is seen as a significant saving.

Needs of the Children's Service

- Capacity to be able to cut the waiting lists for families.
- Provide long-term grant-based preventative work (no certainty with grants and consequently we lose staff after they have been trained due to uncertainty regarding their jobs).
- Service for young people on the high end of the spectrum but without a learning disability – families are clearly in need but the children / young people do not reach the Derwen criteria.

Services for Adults on the Autistic Spectrum

- There are six individuals in Gwynedd who have an ASD diagnosis who are open to the Vulnerable Adults Team.
- An Autistic Spectrum Disorder Support Worker supports 53 adults with an ASD diagnosis; however, these individuals do not reach the eligibility criteria for adults' service.
- At present, there are 534 adults on the learning disability register in Gwynedd. A study estimated that between 20% and 33% of adults with learning disabilities are also autistic.
- A range of services for adults with Asperger syndrome (or high functioning autism) are provided by the Council and by external/independent providers:
 - Coleg Menai – cookery courses and developing life skills courses
 - Supported employment – organisations such as Agoriad and Mantell Gwynedd place, train and maintain individuals with employment, reducing support over a period of time.
 - Welsh Football Trust: North Wales Futsal Project: PORT – Training for adults to be Futsal coaches and to learn communication, mathematical and computer skills.
 - Gwynedd and Môn Asperger/Autism Support Group – opportunities for group work, socialising and leisure.
- In the learning disabilities field, a range of services are provided to support people with Autism and complex needs.
 - Day Support – a service is provided by the internal provider and the independent sector e.g. Cynllun Cymunedol Arfon, Canolfan y Gwystl, Antur Waunfawr, Menter Fachwen and Seren.
 - Support Service – socialising and leisure opportunities, developing everyday life skills.
 - Further Education College
 - Interest/Skills Development Groups
 - Supported Accommodation – supporting individuals in tenancies and nurturing a culture which avoids over-dependency.

- Adults Placement Scheme – enabling adults to live as independently as possible within a family situation.
 - Assistive Technology.
 - Respite Care – there are two respite care houses in the independent sector and respite is available through the adults' placement scheme.
 - Residential service (including provision outside Gwynedd)
- Training held to raise staff awareness and develop skills and use of Active Support models, PECS, Positive Behaviour Support as well as the use of iPads.
 - New accommodation developments – building six one-bedroom bungalows and one two-bedroom bungalow on land at Pant yr Eithin, Harlech.

Due to the nature of ASD, a range of professionals and agencies must work together effectively in order to ensure appropriate and sustainable improvements in the service which focus on the person and the outcomes.

Page 16 of the Director's Annual Report refers to groups of key users that the department serve. The crucial question is why is Autism not mentioned on the list?

The groups noted (Older People, Physical and Sensory Disability, Mental Health Support, Learning Disability, Safeguarding Adults – POVA) are High Level Groups in terms of categories of users. Autism is a specific condition like many other conditions and clearly we can not list all the conditions as this would be inappropriate in the context of identifying High Level Groups.

How does the Gwynedd and Môn Joint ASD Planning and Stakeholders Group work? Terms of Reference?

The purpose of the Gwynedd and Môn Joint ASD Planning and Stakeholders Group is to take responsibility for supervising the development of the All-Wales Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategy locally in order to meet the needs of children and adults with ASD in Gwynedd and Môn.

The constitution of the group includes representatives of the following agencies:

- Specialist Children's Services
- Adults' Services
- Education
- Joint Education Committee
- Children and Young People Partnership Board

- Betsi Cadwaladr University Children's Service
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Adults' Services
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Gwynedd and Môn Autism/Asperger Support Group
- The National Autistic Society
- The Youth Justice Board
- Bangor University
- Leisure
- Service User
- Parents/carers

The responsibilities of the group, which usually meets every quarter, include:

1. Ensure effective links between all services in planning, developing and introducing services to people with ASD.
2. Co-ordinate a multi-agency approach to planning, commissioning and developing services.
3. Co-ordinate and supervise the management of the Welsh Government's ASD grant.
4. Develop work to support the creation of a local ASD Action Plan in order to:
 - Hold an analysis of the needs of the population;
 - Identify the number of children and adults with ASD that Health, Education and social services are aware of;
 - Prioritise needs;
 - Develop an integrated, multi-agency approach to commissioning, developing and introducing services;
 - Adopt an evidence-based approach of providing effective interventions and service developments;
 - Identify and support the needs of Carers;
 - Promote the voice of users and carers when planning, commissioning and developing the service.
5. Review established collaboration and planning arrangements and recommend any amendments needed to strengthen co-planning methods and developing more integrated services as part of the Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy and the All-Wales ASD Strategy and Action Plan.
6. Receive progress reports from partner agencies and planning groups and other associated service enterprises.
7. Investigate options to promote better partnership-working arrangements.
8. Review the implementation of action plans and report back to the Health, Social Care and Well-being Partnership Board and associated planning groups.

The All-Wales ASD Strategy and Action Plan and the ASD Grant steer and set the direction of the work of the Group.

How does the Gwynedd and Môn Joint ASD Planning and Stakeholders Group work? How is the budget allocated?

A confirmation letter regarding the ASD grant was received from the Government for the 2013/14 financial year on 27 June 2013, noting that £40,000 was available to every county for the infrastructure grant. Invitations to apply were sent out across Gwynedd and Anglesey with a closing date of 19 July 2013. Every member of the Group was sent an e-mail with an application form attached, inviting them to apply for the grant. A paper on the guidelines and objectives of the grant was circulated at the group meeting on 18 July 2013 which provided guidance on how to allocate the grant.

Objectives for 2013/14

- Promoting social opportunities
- Developing Education
- Supporting Children and Young People
- Supporting adults
- Training, mentoring and information
- Promote and develop awareness and support
- Strengthen diagnosis and assessment processes and arrangements
- Promote training and employment opportunities for service users

In terms of the guidelines for the use of the grant funding, the ASD grant should not be used to provide statutory services or to save on statutory services budgets. The Grant should be used to:

1. Provide services and support which show additional value in the interests of service users and their parents/carers.
2. Ensure balance in the Expenditure Plan between investment in projects for the Children field and the Adults field.
3. Spur the instigation of innovative projects / pilot schemes in the interests of service users and their parents/carers.
4. Fund seminars / workshops, training sessions to develop awareness, knowledge and skills of service users and their parents/carers.
5. Promote training/skills development opportunities for groups of professional staff rather than promote the personal development of individual staff members.
6. Fund enterprises/projects which promote awareness of the needs of service users and their families in the ASD field.

At the group meeting on 18 July 2013 it was agreed that Gareth Llwyd, Isle of Anglesey County Council ASD Co-ordinator and Sioned Thomas, Gwynedd

Council Strategic Care and Health Manager would accept responsibility for creating an expenditure plan for both counties. The expenditure plan was circulated to the Group once the work had been completed.

After creating the expenditure plan, letters were sent to the successful applicants noting their success, as well as an acceptance form and a progress report form on the projects. It is noted in the acceptance form that the grant is conditional on receiving a progress report on expenditure and activity by the end of the financial year.

In the context of this year's arrangements we have received information that Welsh Government Ministers have agreed to provide £40,000 to every county for the ASD infrastructure grant in 2014/15. We have not yet received official confirmation or any associated guidelines; however, this information does give us an opportunity to plan better for the use of the grant.