

Meeting of:	Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 14 January 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Adult Autism Team
Purpose of Report:	To provide Members with an update on the Adult Autism Team and to outline future actions to be undertaken
Report Owner:	Director of Social Services
Responsible Officer:	Head of Adult Services / Locality Manager
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Suzanne Clifton, Head of Adult Services
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform Scrutiny Committee of the progress of the Adult Autism Team.

Recommendations

1. That the work being undertaken by the Adult Autism Team is considered by Scrutiny Committee.
2. That Scrutiny Committee receives annual updates on the work of this team.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To keep Members apprised of the work of the Adult Autism Team and its achievements to date.
2. To ensure that a further report will be presented to this Scrutiny Committee in 2021.

1. Background

- 1.1 Wales was at the forefront of developing an autism strategy publishing the original document in 2008. The strategy soon recognised that “Adults with ASD do not fit easily within Learning Disability (LD) or Mental Health (MH) Services, and for people with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism especially, this is perhaps the biggest barrier to accessing services.” (WG:2009).
- 1.2 In an effort to address this the Adult Autism Advice service was created in 2012 to work across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. This service was specifically designed to offer low level support, advice and signposting for adults who did not have a learning disability or a mental health problem.
- 1.3 Funding was originally provided in the form of a specific Welsh Government grant. When the grant funding was transferred into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) sufficient funding was identified from the ring-fenced amounts for Cardiff and the Vale to continue providing the service. The service was staffed with two part time staff members and continued to operate in this form until the launch of the Integrated Autism Service in September 2017.
- 1.4 The Welsh Government Minister for Health and Social Services announced in March 2016 £6 Million in funding and in March 2017 an additional £7 million taking the total funding up to of £13 million until March 2021. This funding is to develop an Integrated Autism Service (IAS) across Wales based on health board footprints. The structure of the IAS is prescribed by Welsh Government.
- 1.5 When the new service opened in Penarth in 2017 the two experienced Adult Autism Advice staff were added to the three LA staff funded through the IAS funding to enhance the existing service and provide a resilient basis of information advice and assistance expertise to the new team. The ASD lead was also attached to this new team and provides line management to the local authority staff. This has imbued an ethos of advice and preventative work which is shared by health colleague members of the team who, in addition to their clinical roles also provide information and advice, much of which is collated by the support staff.

- 1.6** Local authorities in both Cardiff and the Vale have supported the local implementation of the IAS. In practical terms this included adding the staff that made up the Adult Autism Team to the Integrated Autism staff team funded by Welsh Government. Local authority staff have continued to deliver an information advice and assistance service as described above, with the added benefits of being part of a wider integrated service.
- 1.7** The Minister’s original funding announcement for the IAS provided funding until 2021. In September 2019 he made a further statement. *“The Integrated Autism Service is funded to March 2021. As we fast approach this date I know there is increasing anxiety about future provision. To allay some of this concern I am making available £3m recurrent funding without prejudice to any changes we may seek to make to the operating model of these services following the conclusion of our evaluation studies.”*
- 1.8** This confirmation of future funding being provided on an ongoing basis provides a solid base of provision for the needs of this group and leads to better staff retention and the ability to plan more confidently for the future.
- 1.9** The Information Advice and Assistance elements of the service are now well established and have proved to be consistently popular with people accessing the service. Support is provided both on an individual and group basis. The individual support provided in each case depends on the needs of the person. Examples include:
- Information on Department of Work and Pension benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA).
 - Help around education for example disabled student allowance.
 - Signposting to advocacy services.
 - Signposting to volunteering opportunities or support gaining employment with organisations such as the Prince’s Trust.
- 1.10** Groups have been a feature of this service since its inception and the two original groups known as Adult Forums continue to run. These are two hour meetings once a month which follow a well-established formula. The first hour will be a guest or organisation of interest to the people attending. Other groups provided are:
- Social Eyes social skills training.
 - Post diagnostic group.
 - Skills for Life group.
 - Get cooking group.
- 1.11** The Skills for Life Group won an award in the 2019 Regional Safeguarding Awards for “Exceptional Commitment to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults’. As well as being informative, the groups provide an opportunity for social contact to a group of people at risk of social isolation.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The confirmation of ongoing Welsh Government funding places the Adult Autism Advice service on a somewhat different and more solid footing compared to its origins as a grant funded service. It has developed from a small regional information and advice service to one that fed into and informed the development of the Integrated Autism Service. This service has become a mainstay of Welsh Government autism policy evidenced by its ongoing funding.
- 2.2** In addition to the development of the Integrated Autism Service, Welsh Government are also working on a Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services. This will underpin existing duties in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the NHS (Wales) Act 2006. This Code of Practice and associated set of guidance has been out for initial consultation and has been subject to scrutiny by technical groups. Current planning indicates that a pre-consultation copy of the draft code will be sent to the Health and Social Care Committee (WG) by the end of this calendar year for feedback. A public consultation on the code, the accompanying guidance and the Regulatory Impact Assessment will be published early in 2020. This code and associated guidance have the potential to move the current IAS of which the Adult Autism Advice Service is a part, onto a statutory footing.
- 2.3** Welsh Government have also commissioned a Scoping Study for the Alignment and Development of Autism and Neurodevelopmental Services. The thinking behind this study was the fact that children's diagnosis is carried out across a wide neurodevelopmental range in contrast to an autism specific adult service. The study found no examples of joint services of such a nature elsewhere and made no firm proposals relating to the creation of such a service. The study did recommend that service leaders in children and young people's ND services and IASs should continue to collaborate and ensure that where alignment is needed the interface between the two services is well managed, and that opportunities for the services to share practice and expertise, and improve alignment are taken. This has no immediate effect on the current service but it may become more important in future years.
- 2.4** Outcomes for people accessing the system are measured using a range of tools. These are prescribed so that there is consistency across Wales. This provides data that indicates reductions in generalised anxiety, reduction in depression score's and improvement in mental health and wellbeing.
- 2.5** Staff additionally apply a technique called the Autism or Spectrum Star. This is used when an adult is embarking on a series of meetings or episode of involvement. The Spectrum Star covers nine key areas:
- Physical Health
 - Living Skills and Self Care
 - Well-being and Self-esteem
 - Sensory differences
 - Communication

- Social skills
- Relationships
- Socially responsible behaviour
- Time and activities.

2.6 By using a tool such as this people are worked with in a consistent way and staff gain a clear indication of the areas that should be concentrated on. By applying it at the end of a series of meetings both the staff member and the individual can get a clear indication of improvements that have been made and where further work might be appropriate. By incorporating it into individuals' records a future referral has a clear starting point.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

Long-term: The evolution of a small grant funded team into part of a Welsh Government funded service places this service on a welcome long-term footing. The additional staff provide a much more flexible and extensive range of response. The team is able to work with clients who were previously far too complex.

- 3.1 Prevention:** It is inherent in the design of this service. The team is not a commissioning service and the concentration of the local authority staff is entirely on low level preventative interventions. This includes work to keep clients safe recently recognised by a staff member receiving one of the Regional Safeguarding Board awards for her exceptional commitment to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.
- 3.2 Integration and Collaboration:** The team has a strong history of working in an integrated and collaborative manner. This was initially around working with social services staff principally based in the Community Learning Disability and Mental Health Teams. With the inception of the IAS, this has now extended to being part of a formal integrated team and working collaboratively day to day with health colleagues.
- 3.3 Involvement:** One of the first actions by the original team was the creation of two adult forums which enabled adults with an autism diagnosis to make their voices heard and to feed into the development of the service. These continue and provide the basis for wider involvement. Examples of this over the past year have included supporting adults to attend a Welsh Government consultation on the SS&WB Act code of practice. Arranging transportation and supporting adults to attend a national conference in Swansea.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

Local authority funding supports two part time ASD Community Support Project Workers who deliver the service across the two local authority areas. The posts

are for 20 hours and 13.5 hours a week. Sufficient funding has been identified within the ring-fenced RSG funding across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to meet the running costs per annum of approximately £25,000. These posts are in addition to the Welsh Government funded IAS posts. This ring-fenced funding also supports the role of ASD lead across the two authorities.

Employment

4.1 There are no specific employment implications as a result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

4.2 There are no specific legal implications as a result of this report.

5. Background Papers

Ministerial Statement: Improvements in autism services

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-improvements-autism-services>

Evaluation of the Integrated Autism Service and Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-05/evaluation-of-the-integrated-autism-service-and-the-autism-spectrum-disorder-strategic-action-plan-final.pdf>

Scoping study Alignment and development of autism and neurodevelopmental services.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-09/scoping-study-alignment-development-autism-neurodevelopmental-services.pdf>

Consultation on code of practice for the delivery of autism

services <https://gov.wales/code-practice-delivery-autism-services>

Report to Healthy Living & Social Care Scrutiny Committee, 6th November 2019.

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/minutes_agendas_and_reports/reports/Scrutiny-HLSC/2017/17-11-06/ASD-Adult-Autism-Team.aspx