

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ADULT AUTISM STRATEGY

To: **Adults Committee**

Meeting Date: **15 September 2016**

From: **Adrian Loades, Executive Director Children Families and Adults**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To report on progress of implementing the Cambridgeshire Adult Autism Strategy**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to note the progress made on implementing the Autism Strategy**

<i>Officer contact:</i>	
Name:	Lee McManus
Post:	Service Development Manager
Email:	Lee.mcmanus@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	07785 721092

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Autism, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) are general terms used to describe a group of complex disorders of brain development. Autism affects in varying degrees how a person communicates verbally and non-verbally, and relates to, other people. It also affects how people with the condition make sense of the world around them. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives and excel in certain areas but others may have accompanying learning disabilities, mental health and physical health conditions and need long term specialist support.
- 1.2 When the Autism Strategy was approved by the Adults Committee in November 2015 there were two main areas of concern for members. One was the relatively low numbers of people being diagnosed compared with the estimated prevalence of the condition across the county. Another was the availability of services to people with autism who live in Fenland. This report seeks to give an update on these areas of concern as well as a general update on the progress of the strategy and action plan as a whole.

2.0 PROGRESS ON THE AUTISM STRATEGY

- 2.1 With regard to diagnosis it is estimated that there are currently about 6,500 people on the autistic spectrum in Cambridgeshire and about 4,500 of these are of working age. Many of those are able to live relatively independent lives and may not see the need for a diagnosis. Those with accompanying learning or physical disabilities or mental health needs may perceive these as their primary condition. Therefore the numbers of people diagnosed are likely to be well below the numbers estimated to have the condition.
- 2.2 In Cambridgeshire the diagnostic service for adults is commissioned by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CPCCG) and provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT). In 2014/15 there were 72 people diagnosed with an autistic spectrum condition and this equates to a rate of 14.3 people diagnosed per 100,000 adult population. This compares favourably to an average rate of 7 per 100,000 population in the Eastern region and is on a par with the rate of 14.4 in England as a whole. In 2015/16 there were 130 people diagnosed in Cambridgeshire which represents a significant increase in the rate of diagnosis. The waiting time for diagnosis in the period 2015/16 has risen to between 6 and 9 months and may reflect the increase in demand for assessments that is reflected in the growing numbers of diagnostic assessments being carried out.
- 2.3 Accessing diagnostic services can be problematic for young people aged 12-17 years who do not have significant mental health needs. Following concerns expressed by the County Council and others, the waiting list for diagnosis carried out by child psychiatrists employed by CPFT has been reopened but assessments have yet to begin. The Government White Paper entitled 'Education Excellence Everywhere' (2016) consolidates the duties of local authorities to ensure that all schools, whether state funded, academies or free schools, promote and safeguard the education of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including children with autism. Schools are obliged to appoint a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) who is a teacher responsible for special educational needs within the school. All schools have a SENCO and work with other teachers and with parents to make sure that pupils

with special educational needs get the right support and help needed at school.

- 2.4 When the Adult Autism Strategy was presented to Adults committee for approval, access to support in Fenland was raised as a specific area of interest for Members. The diagnostic service provided by CPFT is complemented by two part time autism support workers. These workers support people in Fenland and Huntingdonshire by providing advice and information (Tier 1 of Transforming Lives); temporary support in crisis situations (Tier 2) and ongoing one to one support (Tier 3) following diagnosis. The Adults and Autism Team (AAT) carries out assessments and enables access to support in line with Transforming Lives to people on the autistic spectrum who live in Fenland, as well as other areas of the county. Funding has been agreed for two full time support posts within AAT to provide one to one support to people with autism across the county. In addition the Fenland locality team of the Learning Disability Partnership arranges support for people with learning disabilities who are also on the autistic spectrum. Social interaction is particularly difficult for some people with autism and the National Autistic Society provides social evenings and events in Cambridge and these are soon to be trialled in the north of the county. Support for family carers of people on the autistic spectrum is provided by the Carer's Trust and this is available to people in the Fenland area as well as other parts of the county. A comprehensive list of services for people on the autistic spectrum, including those in Fenland, is available online on the County Council website at:
https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/site/custom_scripts/fid_results.aspx?q=Autism

- 2.5 Below are two case studies which demonstrate the kind of support offered and the outcomes achieved.

1. Case Study 1 – Fenland

A has been looking for work in her local area. Her support worker supported her to write and hand out CVs to local shops and charities and to fill out a number of online applications. As a result A was offered a volunteering position at a local social training and enterprise organisation, helping to attend to the garden and supporting people in the arts and crafts department. She will start her new position in the next few weeks.

2. Case Study 2 – South Cambridgeshire

B is a graduate and had been looking for suitable paid employment without any success for many years. His support worker helped him to engage in local social activities and voluntary work. They also helped with job applications and gaining experience in voluntary work on autism awareness. After many unsuccessful applications he was able to secure a work experience placement which then led to full time paid employment.

- 2.6 Progress in implementing the adult autism strategy has also been made in the following areas:

1. The County Council has created the post of Additional Needs Employment Strategy Coordinator to assist young people with disabilities, including those on the autistic spectrum, into employment. The Council is considering offering internships to young people on the autistic spectrum so they can gain work experience in order to prepare them for employment.
2. The County Council has also provided funding to 'Project Bedazzle,' which

helps young people on the autistic spectrum prepare for work. The Project has already helped six people in Cambridge to identify the skills and experience they need to apply for jobs and is being expanded to commence work in Huntingdon and Fenland.

3. The Richmond Fellowship operates a similar programme, funded by the CPCCG, to work with people for six weeks on Curriculum Vitae development and job search.
4. Red2Green, a Social Training Enterprise funded by the County Council, provides employment support to ten people on the autistic spectrum and operates an Aspirations programme which helps people with autism develop social skills and enhances links with schools and local communities.
5. The National Autistic Society autism support workers, funded by the County Council are currently supporting fifteen people who are seeking employment or are already employed.
6. The countywide advocacy service is being re-tendered and additional resources will be available and accessible to people with autism in order to support their involvement in social care needs assessments and reviews in line with the Care Act.

3.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The initiatives relating to employment described in 2.6 above will enable more people with autism to access employment and contribute to the local economy.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

Greater access to appropriate services and support will enable people with autism to lead more healthy and independent lives.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

The support available for people with autism described in the report offers opportunities to gain employment and develop social skills and the support of an advocate, if needed, to ensure that they are fully involved in assessment and reviews of any social care needs.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

Short term investment has been agreed to provide two support workers who will extend the availability of short term, focused intervention to support people with autism to be more independent. If this is successful, longer term investment will be explored.

4.2 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The autism strategy is compliant with the Care Act 2014 and the Adult Autism Strategy: Statutory Guidance 2015.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

The aim of the strategy is to improve the lives of people with autism and is inclusive of all people with autism whether or not they have had a formal diagnosis.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Public Health

As this report outlines, ensuring equity of access to diagnostic and support services for those with Autism Spectrum Conditions remains important. As the population within Cambridgeshire increases we expect to see an increase in prevalence of ASC (JSNA Autism, Personality Disorders and Dual Diagnosis 2014 p.39).

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: T Kelly (Adults)
Has the impact on Statutory, Legal and Risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes or No (NO RESPONSE) Name of Legal Officer: Lynne Owen / Kim Fairbrother
Are there any Equality and Diversity implications?	Yes Name of Officer: Claire Bruin
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Simon Cobby
Are there any Localism and Local Member involvement issues?	Yes Name of Officer: Claire Bruin
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Emma DeZoete

Source Documents	Location
Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2015/16 – 2018/19	Available from Lee McManus Lee.mcmanus@cambridgeshire.gov.uk 07785 721092