

Feedback for Department of Health Autism Strategy Consultation

Surrey Learning Disability Partnership Board
Friday 4th September 2009

There were 40 people present at the meeting. They were a mixture of people with autistic spectrum disorders, other people with a learning disability, carers, and professionals. It was not possible to establish the exact numbers from each of these groups. We had a discussion to identify priorities for the government to look at, using the headings identified in the consultation document. For each priority, we looked at:



What works well?



What doesn't work well?



Ways to make things better

1. Social Inclusion



What works well?

- When workers understand autistic spectrum needs and can adapt local and national processes
- Knowing the individual's needs
- Consistency of workers
- Regular low-level support prevents crises where much higher levels of input would be required
- Communication passports can be extremely helpful in all areas of an individual's life
- Autism Specific Services
- Surrey process to highlight autism



What doesn't work well?

- No diagnosis locally
- Inflexibility of approach
- Last minute changes to plans, and how these are managed
- Funding for some "preventative" low level services for people with Aspergers may be at risk
- Lack of consistency of services across the county – People don't want to / can't travel



Ways to make things better

- More use of Communication Passports
- More low level services, with secure funding, and structured activities as well as social groups
- Better understanding of the autistic spectrum and individuals' needs
- Need to ensure sufficient support for carers of people with ASD
- Special schools need to ensure young people with ASD are better prepared for work and citizenship
- More community involvement for individuals
- Improve the quality of services for people on the autistic spectrum using procurement to spell out the quality expected – eg Autism Accreditation
- Specialist services to be in place for people with high needs coming through transition

2. Health



What works well?

- Communication Passports
- Diagnosis is improving



What doesn't work well?

- Staff need to be better at identifying ASD in adults
- Recognition of the disability still takes a long time.
- Dentistry for people with ASD



Ways to make things better

- Every surgery should have a lead GP for ASD and learning disability
- GPs need training in ASD, and need to be informed by specialists
- Children's and adults' health services need to communicate well to ensure a smooth transition
- Health professionals need to listen properly, and understand the autistic spectrum, and helpful interventions.
- Need autistic spectrum specialist dentist service

3. Choice and Control



What works well?

- Communication Passports
- Using PECS – need services with staff trained to do this



What doesn't work well?

- Imposed choices based on services available rather than celebration of differences



Ways to make things better

- More appropriate support and supported living services
- Need better links to mental health services
- Need more rigorous Person Centred Planning

4. Raising Awareness / Training



Ways to make things better

- Need a high profile national campaign to raise awareness of autism
- We need more training for:
 - Job Centre staff
 - GPs
 - Health teams
 - Police
 - Ambulance service
 - Colleges

5. Jobs and Education



What works well?

- Portal – Partnership between NAS and EmployAbility – Autism specific course and links to job centre and local employers.



Ways to make things better

- Job Centre staff need training to understand ASD and support people effectively.
- More people need to be integrated into mainstream education by joint work between specialist and mainstream provision
- College staff need to understand the needs of people with ASD