

**Worcestershire's
All-Age Autism Strategy**

2014-17

Contents Page

	Page
1 Executive Summary and Key Priorities	3
2 Autism and use of terminology	6
3 Why does Worcestershire need an Autism Strategy	8
4 Legislation and Statutory Frameworks	10
5 The pathway for diagnosis and support	13
6 Awareness raising and training	17
7 Securing successful and seamless transitions	19
8 Improving access to education and employment	21
9 Improving access to health, social care and housing services	23
10 Local planning	24
11 References	25

1. Executive Summary and Key Priorities

Improving Outcomes for children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions.

All children, young people and adults with autism spectrum disorders are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society which accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it and can expect all services to treat them as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.

The strategy is in response to the national challenge by government to ensure that people with autism spectrum conditions have access to the right kind of support.

The strategy outlines the ways services will be transformed for children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions in Worcestershire. It is firmly based on the commitments in the Worcestershire Health and Well Being Strategy to ensure fair access to health services for people and for communities with poor health outcomes so that Worcestershire residents are healthier, live longer and have a better quality of life.

The legislation is different for children, young people and their families, and for adults, and this is reflected in this strategy. Transition arrangements must be effective as children and young people move from children's services to adult services.

Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is for children, young people and their families, and adults with autism spectrum conditions. Autism is a complex lifelong developmental condition that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people and how they make sense of the world around them. Autism is known as a spectrum condition because of the wide range of ways in which it presents itself in different people.

Why is a strategy needed?

It provides the strategic direction for education, health and social care organisations that support children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions.

We need to ensure there is a clear and consistent pathway for diagnosis and support.

The strategy describes the key priorities to improve the lives of people with autism spectrum conditions, securing better outcomes through improved knowledge and understanding of autism spectrum conditions, employment opportunities, and improved access to high quality education, health, social care and housing services.

We will be clear about the actions we need to take, what success looks like and the timescale for each action.

Based on our vision, National Guidance and requirements of key legislation, we have identified key priorities which over the lifetime of this strategy will be developed and delivered. These are linked to an action plan to ensure that outcomes are clearly identified.

Key Priorities

We will have a clear pathway for diagnosis and support for children, young people and adults with autism.

We will identify gaps in knowledge and understanding and make sure that all organisations can access high quality awareness raising and training.

We will improve transition planning to include a Transition Toolkit with details of access to a range of services and that can offer support for young people and adults in their decision making.

We will work with providers of education, employment and training opportunities to make sure they understand the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions and support them appropriately.

We will make sure that people with autism spectrum disorders are supported to make the most of their talents as they progress to more independent living.

We will build on the existing local support services in Worcestershire through existing stakeholder groups, such as the Worcestershire Autism Partnership Group.

We will make sure that the needs and potential vulnerability of children, young people and adults with autism have been considered by all agencies in the partnership in the planning and delivery of their services.

We will improve our data collection which will be used to inform future commissioning of services, including condition specific services.

We will ensure that parents, carers, children and young people and adults are fully engaged in consultation and service review as part of our commitment to improved outcomes and quality of life for people with autism.

We will promote the use of support groups in local communities and ensure they can access information about local services that are available.

2. Autism and use of terminology

Definition

For the purpose of this strategy autism is defined as:

"A lifelong condition that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how a person makes sense of the world around them"

Source: National Autistic Society

Autism is known as a spectrum because of the range of difficulties it causes and because children, young people and adults can experience those difficulties along a range from mild to severe. Many people with autism are able to live with minimal specialist support; others need a lifetime of specialist services to maximise independence, control and choice.

Asperger Syndrome is an autism spectrum condition. People with Asperger Syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. Such people have fewer difficulties with communication but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language, and do not usually have the accompanying learning disabilities.

Although some people with autism specific conditions may develop mental health problems, often as a result of lack of support and because of social isolation and exclusion, autism specific conditions are neither a mental health condition nor a learning disability.

The Autism Education Trust's National Autism Standards (2012) describe autism spectrum conditions as 'a neurological difference in brain development that has a marked effect on how a person develops'. It highlights four areas of difference:

- Understanding the social interactive style and emotional expression of other people
- Understanding and using communication and language
- How information is processed

- The way sensory information is processed

Understanding the impact of these differences on how people learn and make sense of their environment is critical for all agencies in planning and developing the right provision and services in the right places.

The characteristics of autism spectrum conditions vary from one person to another. As a result of interaction between the areas of difference, people with autism spectrum conditions may have

- Increased anxiety levels
- Need for routines, sometimes having a compulsive nature
- Difficulty in transitioning to a new activity
- Difficulties generalising skills learnt in one situation to another
- Special interests
- The ability to be highly focused when on a specific task
- Difficulties with self-awareness, understanding and expressing their own needs
- Under or over sensory sensitivity

3. Why does Worcestershire need an Autism Strategy?

3.1 Context

This strategy outlines the vision to transform services for children, young people and adults with autism in Worcestershire. It describes the key priorities to improve the lives of people with autism, securing better outcomes through improved services, knowledge and understanding of autism.

The Strategy is based on the commitments in Worcestershire's Health and Well Being Strategy. It also responds to the national challenge by government to ensure that people with autism have access to the right kind of support in mainstream services, and in condition specific services.

3.2 Commitments within the Health and Well Being Strategy

- We will ensure fair access to health services for people with learning disabilities and communities with poor health outcomes
- We will ensure that people have access to clear and concise information about how to manage common physical and mental health problems and that they are signposted to appropriate services where they require further advice or support

3.3 Vision

All children, young people and adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society which accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.

This is based on the vision within the national autism strategy – Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives

This strategy adopts a lifelong approach to supporting people with autism, linking adult services with services for children and young people and their families.

Through its implementation, more people with autism spectrum conditions will be diagnosed and be supported by services. Newly diagnosed children will be supported by appropriate education, health and social care services with supported transition to appropriate adult services. Effective transition systems will enable a seamless experience for those people with autism spectrum conditions who need support to have fulfilling and rewarding lives.

3.4 Aims

The Strategy aims to:

- Set out the objectives and outcomes for autism services and support in Worcestershire in line with the national strategy in response to the requirements set out in legislation, including Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives
- Provide a framework of how to monitor and evidence quality of service, to ensure it supports the achievement of national and local targets and performance indicators and supports effective commissioning of services.
- Outline an action plan of how work will be taken forward in the next 3 years in key priority areas.
- Illustrate a shared understanding of the needs of people with autism, the impact it can have on people's lives and how to use available resources in the most efficient way to improve the outcomes for people with autism
- Ensure that all staff and agencies working with people with autism who may be at risk are aware of Worcestershire's safeguarding policies and procedures

4. Legislation and Statutory Frameworks for Adults including carers

In recent years there have been a number of national developments relating to people with autism spectrum conditions. This provides context for this strategy and its key priorities. The strategy will reflect the different statutory duties for services that support children, young people and adults and ensure smooth transition for people who use the services

- Care Act 2014 and associated guidance and regulations
- Autism Act 2009;
- "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England", March 2010 and associated statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the strategy published in December 2010 – see Appendix A for key duties;
- Improving access to social care for autism (2011) guidelines from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE);
- Equality Act 2010

Legislation and Statutory Frameworks for Children and Young People, including parent carers:

- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (0-25) 2014;
- Aiming High for Disabled Children;
- Children Act 1989 and associated guidance and regulations
- Children Act 2004 and associated guidance and regulations
- Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance and regulations

An overview of this context is provided in Appendix B.

Population and local prevalence

Effective planning for services requires good information to inform decision making. It is recognised that this is limited in Worcestershire and improvement in this is one of the key priorities of this strategy. What is known is:

- The majority of children with autism spectrum conditions in Worcestershire are educated in mainstream settings; some are placed in specialist base provision and 25% are in special schools provision. 20% of the total places commissioned by the Council in out of area placements are for children and young people with autism spectrum conditions;
- The demographics of Worcestershire of the 18-64 age group including the local prevalence of autism spectrum conditions, taken from Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information System (P.A.N.S.I.), shows there is currently a 1% prevalence, which includes Asperger Syndrome
- Due to the projected demographic decrease in Worcestershire in the 18-64 age group, the numbers of adults diagnosed with autism spectrum conditions is not projected to rise

	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
18 - 64	339,500	336,200	335,100	334,000	332,600
Change		-1%	-1%	-2%	-2%
Autism	3379	3351	3345	3333	3327
Prevalence	0.99%	0.99%	0.99%	0.99%	1%

- In the over 65 year group, however, numbers are projected to increase significantly and this will lead to a higher prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in the over 65 group
- According to data from the National Autistic Society, between 44% and 52% of people with autism spectrum conditions have a learning disability.

Key priorities

The key priorities have been linked to an action plan to ensure that outcomes are clearly identified and ultimately people with autism in Worcestershire receive the best possible support and that mainstream services have staff in place who know and understand autism, and have the skills and competencies to work with people on the autism spectrum.

We will have a clear pathway for diagnosis and support for children, young people and adults with autism

We will identify gaps in knowledge and understanding and make sure that all organisations can access high quality awareness raising and training

We will improve transition planning to include a Transition Toolkit with details of access to a range of services and that can offer support for young people and adults in their decision making

We will work with providers of education, employment and training opportunities to make sure they understand the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions and support them appropriately.

We will make sure that people with autism spectrum disorders are supported to make the most of their talents as they progress to more independent living

We will build on the existing local support services in Worcestershire through existing stakeholder groups, such as the Worcestershire Autism Partnership Group

We will make sure that the needs and potential vulnerability of children, young people and adults with autism have been considered by all agencies in the partnership in the planning and delivery of their services

We will improve our data collection which will be used to inform future commissioning of services, including condition specific services

We will ensure that parents, carers, children and young people and adults are fully engaged in consultation and service review as part of our commitment to improved outcomes and quality of life for people with autism

We will promote the use of support groups in local communities and ensure they can access information about local services that are available

5. The pathway for diagnosis and support

Identification of a possible autism spectrum condition is the essential first step to effective support, even before a formal diagnosis. We recognise that diagnosis is not a goal in itself but part of the integrated process which should lead to people with autism spectrum conditions being able to access the services and support they need.

Our Worcestershire strategy will ensure there is a clear and consistent pathway in all areas. We aim to support people with autism spectrum conditions to receive a diagnosis at the earliest opportunity.

The majority of people who are diagnosed with autism spectrum conditions receive their diagnosis as children. Worcestershire will continue to encourage early identification of potential autism spectrum conditions in childhood and improve the transition from children's to adult services. This should support a reduction in the numbers of people with autism spectrum conditions who reach adulthood without a diagnosis.

However it is not unusual for adults to be referred for an assessment of an autism spectrum condition: Currently there are routes for achieving an assessment and diagnosis but these routes are not widely known or consistent across the county, especially for adults. A new pathway for support and assessment is currently being developed and this will also include information and advice available to people with autism spectrum conditions to ensure they understand what is available to them. Onward referrals to other services and signposting for support also need to be widely promoted.

It is important that needs are identified as soon as possible so that they can be met in the most appropriate way. The assessment over time may indicate an autism spectrum condition, but early support to meet the individual's identified needs should not be dependent on a diagnosis of autism. However, a diagnosis may signpost to the most appropriate source of information and support. Effective support requires a clear understanding of the individual's needs and strengths.

Early Help

Early Help supports families with children aged 0 to 19, and up to 25 for those with a disability. Services are there to help families with a range of issues and aim to nip problems in the bud before they get worse. They are also there to offer support for families who have just finished working with social care services. The Early Help Hub can be used as a single point of contact for professionals and families to request the support of an early help service.

For more information visit <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/early-help-strategy.aspx>

Current arrangements for the Identification and assessment of autism spectrum conditions in children and young people

A process is in place for the diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions in pre-school and school age children and young people.

Assessment for potential autism spectrum conditions in Worcestershire, is set within the wider assessment of neuro-developmental difficulties and called the Umbrella Pathway. This has been developed to provide assessment and support process for all children and young people presenting with neuro-developmental difficulties.

The pathway provides a multi-disciplinary and multi-professional service involving health social care and education services, with a clear entry point, an assessment process, diagnostic pathway and support for children and young people. This includes those receiving a diagnosis at the end of the process and those where no specific diagnosis is reached but on-going care and support are signposted.

When the assessment has been completed, parent or carers are offered a face to face meeting to share and discuss diagnostic outcomes. They are also provided with information on autism spectrum conditions and local services that are available. Information is also available on Worcestershire's Local Offer website which can be accessed at www.worcestershirelocaloffer.org.uk

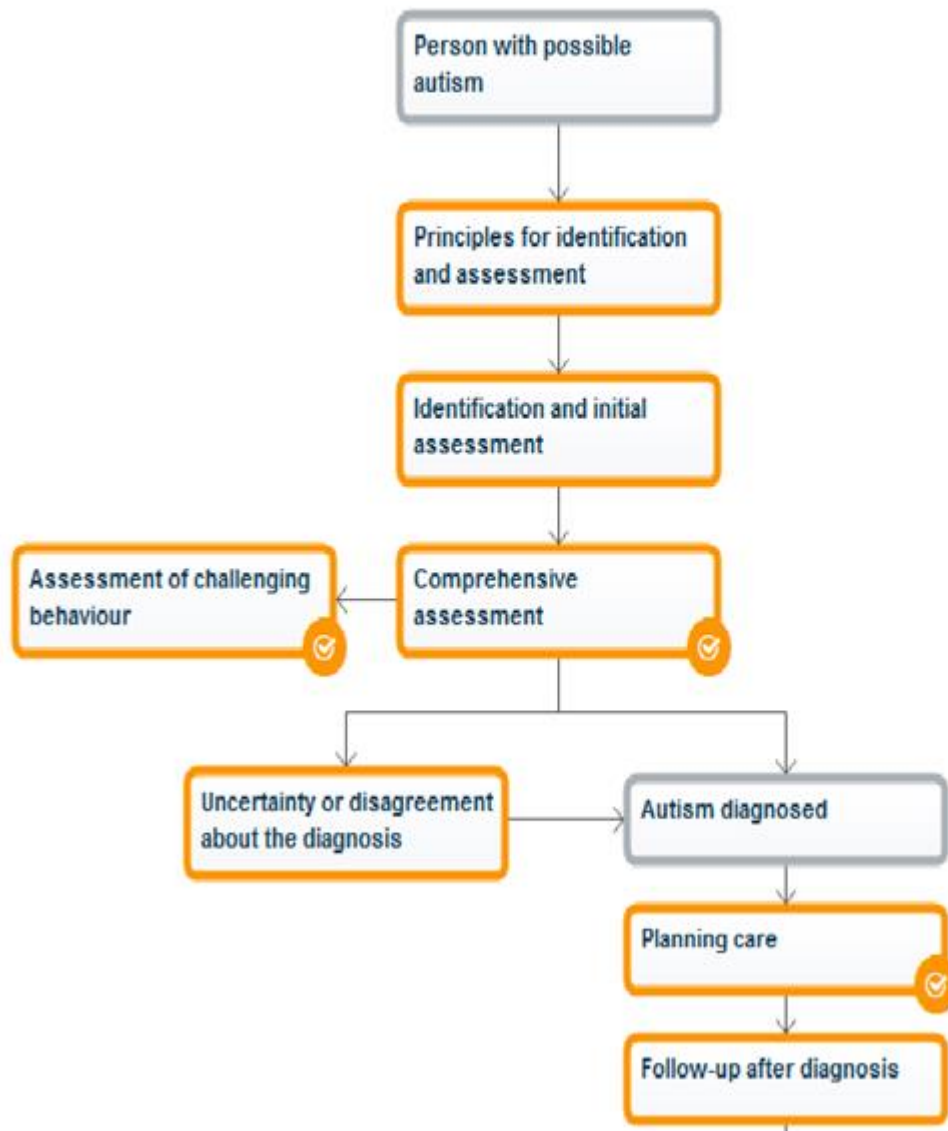
The Action Plan associated with this strategy will seek to develop this, and will include the need to review the pathway as a priority within this strategy and reflect the need for an all age pathway, review the assessment process in line with the SEND Code of Practice for children and young people 0-25 years of age, and equality of access to provision to ensure

consistency of practice and service available to people with autism wherever they may live in Worcestershire. Effective data sharing will also support the commissioning of appropriate, high quality provision.

Current arrangements for the Identification and Assessment of autism spectrum conditions in adults

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives states that diagnosis is not compulsory. Some adults who exhibit the characteristics of autism will not want to be referred for a formal diagnosis but will still be entitled to a needs assessment under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and, as of April 2015, the Care Act. A diagnosis however is not a guarantee of support and services; it is a reason for assessment of need. People who receive a diagnosis of autism do have access to a limited amount of post-diagnostic support from health clinicians.

Identification and assessment of autism in adults



6. Awareness raising and training

Services for people with autism spectrum conditions will aim to ensure that support needs are clearly explained and relevant information is given following assessment and, where appropriate, diagnosis. Information is needed for children, young people and adults, their families and carers.

Parents and carers of children and young people receiving assessment through the Umbrella Pathway receive an information pack which contains autism awareness and local services information.

Feedback from parents, carers, pupils and professionals is clear – all staff working with people with autism spectrum conditions should have access to at least basic information and training and this is a key priority for this strategy.

Worcestershire County Council is working with the Autism Education Trust (AET), a national body funded by the Department for Education, to promote and support effective practice for people with autism spectrum conditions.

Worcestershire is the first local area in the country to become an associate member of a Regional Hub.

Schools are currently subscribing to Level 1 and Level 2 of the training on offer via AET which is delivered to whole school staff. There are plans to develop a Level 3 offer, a programme for all schools to use the National Autism Standards and Competencies and programmes for Early Years and Post 16 providers. This training can be offered to other providers and organisations to ensure they understand and can meet the needs of people with autism.

For adults who may be Care Act eligible, they will be offered an assessment from adult social care teams and additionally information on carer's assessments will be made available. The assessment will be person centred and holistic resulting in a care plan which clearly

identifies the outcomes for the person and the support required to achieve those outcomes.

Where people are not Care Act eligible, they will be given access to information about autism spectrum conditions and about sources of support which will be available of the Your Life Your Choice website. These will include local autism support services, voluntary groups, national autism representative groups and the 'Living with Autism' section on the NHS Choices website.

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (December 2010) says that increasing awareness and understanding of autism is fundamental towards improving services for adults with autism.

Health and social care staff in Worcestershire already have access to some training in Worcestershire. Social care staff who are working directly with children and young people with autism are required to undertake specialist training and other staff may access this training on a needs led basis. However, there are currently no workplace plans or training programmes in place to ensure this is a basic requirement for all who may have direct contact with adults with autism. This is a key priority for this strategy.

This Worcestershire strategy will seek ways to make training available to all staff working in education, health and social care in Worcestershire. Those who are most likely to have contact with child and young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions will be prioritised, but as a minimum, training to raise awareness of autism spectrum conditions will be implemented across all levels of staff.

This training will also include key staff in the Criminal Justice system

The core aims of the awareness training will be that staff are able to identify potential signs of autism spectrum conditions and understand how to make the necessary reasonable adjustments in the behaviour, communication and services for people who may have autism spectrum conditions.

More specialised training should be undertaken by staff who hold key roles in the assessment and support planning.

7. Securing successful and seamless transitions

Wherever possible the Worcestershire Autism Partnership Group will work on influencing other organisations, providers and public services to develop their understanding of autism spectrum conditions and how they can make reasonable adjustments to better support people

People with autism spectrum conditions can find change very difficult and are often unable to visualise what life might be like in the future. Transitions can happen at all ages, and the transition from children's to adult services can be a particularly traumatic time for young people and their families, often associated with high levels of anxiety.

Becoming an adult can be daunting for any young person. The aim of the strategy is to enable support to prepare for adulthood to be accessed through ordinarily available services as well as specialist services where this is needed.

Some children will not require the same level of service when they are an adult, and some will require more. The level of service will be determined by an assessment of need. We aim to have a clear pathway for those young people who may require more specialist support from social care services as adults.

Social workers are linked with schools to identify children as early as possible who may need this additional support and to plan the transition with the young person and their family.

The transition between each phase of education and transfer to new placements is also potentially a difficult time for children and young people. The aim of this strategy is for people with autism spectrum conditions to experience a successful and seamless transition.

A "Transition Toolkit" for children and young people with autism (both for Early Years and school age) has been produced and used to support successful transitions. Each child and young person going through transition has a plan and providers of early years, schools and post 16 provision have access to the toolkit. This will be reviewed as a priority and include information that would support successful transition for adults with autism spectrum conditions.

8. Improving access to education and employment

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (March 2010) says that the ability to get, and keep, a job and then to progress in work is the best route out of poverty, and is a central part of social inclusion.

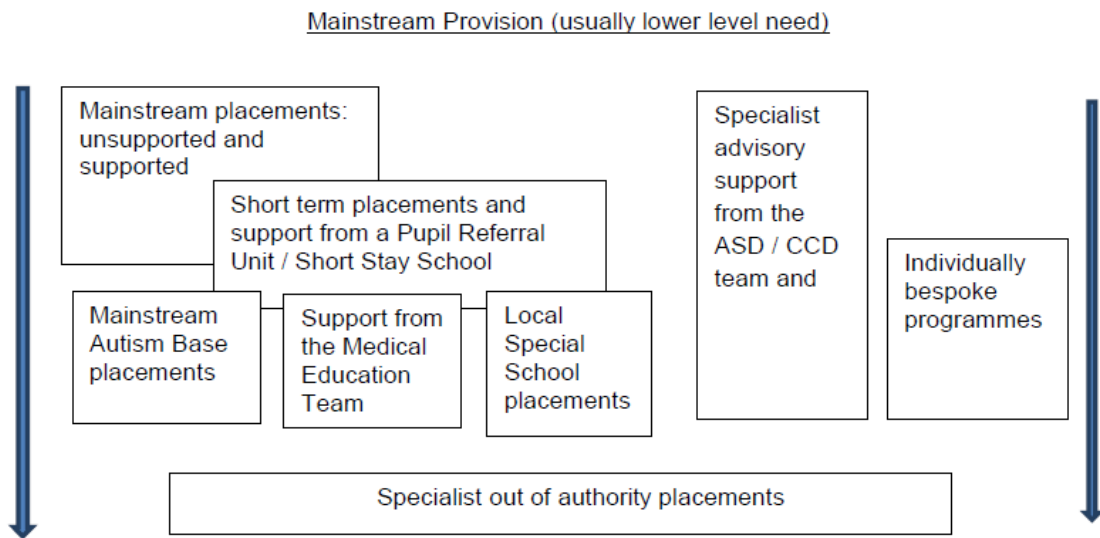
Nationally only 15% of adults with a diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions are in employment (Redman, S et al (2009) *Don't Write me off: Make the system fair for people with autism*. London. NAS) Success in employment starts by ensuring that children and young people have their needs identified and met in school. Work experience opportunities should be matched to a young person's strengths and interests, and awareness training for work experience providers will support successful placements. Training should include reasonable adjustments that should be considered as part of placement arrangements and providers need to access awareness raising and training if placements are to be successful.

Young people with autism spectrum conditions need to be supported through education in order to maximise their potential and gain the qualifications they are capable of. Educational settings need to make reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers in completing courses, attaining qualifications and the social aspect of college life.

Worcestershire is committed to continuing to develop a continuum of educational provision that recognises different levels of specialism, experience and expertise in provider settings, and enables specialist advice and support to be made available.

Worcestershire's educational provision for its pupils with autism spectrum conditions is set out below

Diagram 1: The structure of educational provision for pupils on the autism spectrum in Worcestershire.



For young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan, transition reviews in school from Year 9 onwards should support planning for further education, employment or training.

Currently there are developments across both mental health and learning disabilities services regarding employment support and the aim is to ensure that adults with autism spectrum conditions are fully included in any developments as this strategy is implemented.

Adults with autism spectrum conditions often need support with building skills and overcoming barriers to work and Worcestershire wants to help people with autism make the most of their talents by getting the same opportunities to employment as everyone else. This will include working with some employers in order to raise their understanding of autism and what reasonable adjustments they can make.

9. Improving access to health, social care and housing services

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (March 2010) says that adults with autism should be able to expect public services to treat them fairly as individuals.

Social Inclusion

All people with autism spectrum conditions are entitled to be able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. Worcestershire Autism Partnership Group [WAPG] and in turn this strategy, will focus on making it easier for adults with autism spectrum conditions to feel more included.

Autism specific services and support have a role to play in helping people cope with everyday situations in the community. We aim to develop partnerships with other agencies to build on the current local support services in Worcestershire.

Accommodation

A focus of Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives is to make it easier for adults with autism spectrum conditions to access mainstream housing services and understand the options available to them, including the financial help they may be entitled to. WAPG will work with local housing providers to consider the needs of adults with autism spectrum conditions within the planning, design and allocation of local accommodation.

Health

Some adults with autism spectrum conditions are reluctant to see a GP or other health professional either because of the lack of understanding amongst staff or the inappropriate facilities and communication methods. Health services need to be able to respond appropriately so that people with autism spectrum conditions are encouraged to seek advice before needing to access support in a crisis or with an acute health problem.

Children and young people with diagnosed autism spectrum conditions will be known to Community Paediatricians and usually the Umbrella Pathway. Transition from children's to adult services can

cause anxiety if effective systems for information sharing are not in place.

Social care

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Not all children and young people with autism spectrum conditions will need a social care service. Some services can be accessed without needing a referral to social care. These are published through the Local Offer. They include services such as community short breaks, play schemes and out-of-school clubs, support groups and advice on benefits.

Some children and young people with autism spectrum conditions will access social care service, which may include specialist respite care, and they may have a direct payment to meet care needs. The direct payment may help to fund domiciliary care, support workers or bespoke need.

We recognise that for a very few children with very special needs they will require care in specialist provision.

Families for children and young people may also use a personal budget to develop their own package of support.

The criteria to access social care services is set out in WSCB Thresholds Guidance and the Eligibility/Threshold Criteria for Children with Disabilities and Young Adults Teams

Adults with autism spectrum conditions who are eligible for adult social care support should be enabled to benefit from personalisation by accessing personal budgets which are in line with their assessment.

10. Local planning

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (March 2010) is clear that change needs to be driven locally, through strong local leadership. The key to this is local partners coming together in one place to discuss priorities and challenges together, and how this might be done will need to be determined locally.

For adult, Worcestershire has an Autism Partnership Group, which includes a range of stakeholders who are committed to meet regularly to address the priorities included in the Action Plan that supports this strategy. The aim of the group is to set the direction of improved services for people with autism spectrum conditions and ensure improvements happen. The group has been instrumental in developing the adult's element of this strategy and determining the actions required to deliver the strategy. The membership of this group should be reviewed as a priority to ensure all services are represented in the delivery of this all age strategy.

The strategy also aims to develop the partnership between Clinical Commissioning Groups and Worcestershire County Council so that services which are relevant to the needs of the local population can be commissioned.

Improved local autism data will better inform future commissioning and support the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This will ensure that, for all people with autism spectrum conditions, the right services are delivered in the right way to those who need them and by the best possible provider.

11. REFERENCES

For specific information about Autism: <http://www.autism.org.uk/>

Think Autism - Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299866/Autism_Strategy.pdf

Care Act 2014 – Draft Statutory Guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315993/Care-Act-Guidance.pdf

Worcestershire Health and Well Being Strategy:
<http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk/cms/pdf/Joint-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-2013-16.pdf>

Worcestershire's Local Offer website which can be accessed at:
<http://www.worcestershirelocaloffer.org.uk>

The Early Help Hub: For more information visit
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/early-help-strategy.aspx>

Appendix A: Duties under the National Strategy and Guidance

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives sets out the duties for Local Authorities and the NHS locally (source: National Autistic Society 2014):

1. Provide autism awareness training for all staff
2. Must provide specialist autism training for key staff, such as GPs and community care assessors
3. Cannot refuse a community care assessment for adults with autism based solely on IQ
4. Must appoint an autism lead in their area
5. Must develop a clear pathway for diagnosis and assessment for adults with autism
6. Need to commission services based on adequate population data.

Appendix B

Overview of National Context

Children and Young People and their Parent Carers:

The SEND Code of Practice (2014) now covers the 0-25 age range and includes guidance relating to disabled children and young people as well as those with SEN. It requires:

- A clearer focus on the participation of children and young people and parents in decision-making at individual and strategic levels
- A stronger focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for children and young people.
- For children and young people with more complex needs, a co-ordinated assessment process and the new 0-25 Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) which replace statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs)
- A greater focus on support that enables those with SEN to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on the local authority to provide services for all children in need, including children with a disability. A child is in need when their health or welfare may be significantly impaired without additional services.

The local authority is required to keep a register of children in the county with a disability, although registration is voluntary.

All children with a disability who may be in need are entitled to assessment.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all statutory agencies to co-operate in the safeguarding of children and in meeting their needs.

The **Aiming High for Disabled Children** programme was introduced to transform services for disabled children and local authorities in England were given money to fund new short-break services for disabled children, including children and young people with autism

The Equality Act 2010 - The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people with the protected characteristics that are specified in the Act. Disability is one of the specified protected characteristics. Protection from discrimination for disabled people applies to disabled people in a range of circumstances, covering the provision of goods, facilities and services, the exercise of public functions, premises, work, education, and associations.

Adults and their Carers

The Care Act 2014 includes duties to

- promote wellbeing when carrying out any of their care and support functions in respect of an individual.
- ensure the provision or arrangement of services, facilities or resources to help prevent, delay or reduce the development of needs for care and support and
- to establish and maintain an information and advice service in their area. The information and advice service must cover the needs of all its population, not just those who are in receipt of care or support which is arranged or funded by the local authority.

The **Autism Act (2009)** placed a duty on the Government to produce a National Strategy. The Act was in response to an identified gap in provision for people with autism. It specified that a national strategy was to be in place by April 2010.

The strategy "**Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England**" was published in March 2010, with statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the strategy published in December 2010. As a result, a range of national policies, mainly directed at adults with autism has emerged. The 2014 update by the Government has identified 15 priority challenges for action as follows:

An equal part of my local community

1. I want to be accepted as who I am within my local community. I want people and organisations in my community to have opportunities to raise their awareness and acceptance of autism.
2. I want my views and aspirations to be taken into account when decisions are made in my local area. I want to know whether my local area is doing as well as others.

3. I want to know how to connect with other people. I want to be able to find local autism peer groups, family groups and low level support.
4. I want the everyday services that I come into contact with to know how to make reasonable adjustments to include me and accept me as I am. I want the staff who work in them to be aware and accepting of autism.
5. I want to be safe in my community and free from the risk of discrimination, hate crime and abuse.
6. I want to be seen as me and for my gender, sexual orientation and race to be taken into account.

The right support at the right time during my lifetime

7. I want a timely diagnosis from a trained professional. I want relevant information and support throughout the diagnostic process.
8. I want autism to be included in local strategic needs assessments so that person centred local health, care and support services, based on good information about local needs, is available for people with autism.
9. I want staff in health and social care services to understand that I have autism and how this affects me.
10. I want to know that my family can get help and support when they need it.
11. I want services and commissioners to understand how my autism affects me differently through my life. I want to be supported through big life changes such as transition from school, getting older or when a person close to me dies.
12. I want people to recognise my autism and adapt the support they give me if I have additional needs such as a mental health problem, a learning disability or if I sometimes communicate through behaviours which others may find challenging.
13. If I break the law, I want the criminal justice system to think about autism and to know how to work well with other services.

Developing my skills and independence and working to the best of my ability

14. I want the same opportunities as everyone else to enhance my skills, to be empowered by services and to be as independent as possible.

15. I want support to get a job and support from my employer to help me keep it.

Supporting people with autism through adulthood (June 2009) is a report which looks at the range of services available for adults with autism and their carers in England. Their main findings indicate that people with autism may use a very wide range of public services, but that the data available on the number of people with autism using services is limited. Despite limitations the report states that there are two key areas where the effectiveness of existing services can be improved. They are:

- Better strategy and planning, based on good information and raising levels of knowledge
- Awareness of the nature of autism and the potential needs of people with autism

Improving access to social care for autism (2011) guidelines from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) give a number of key recommendations for practice, including:

- Greater understanding of autism among the social care workforce
- Better awareness of autism in the social care sector can help people get a diagnosis of autism and get timely and appropriate support when they are diagnosed
- Staff supporting people with autism need to make adjustments in how they work, plan and communicate with people with autism and with each other, so that services can be more accessible to people with autism

- Managers and commissioners of services also need to be flexible, creative and collaborative in how they meet the needs of people with autism.
- Good support is vital when people with autism experience significant life changes
- Frontline and senior staff need to work with people with autism to enable them and their families to make the most of personalisation
- Support with social interaction and practical everyday living tasks can address some of needs people with autism commonly have at relatively low cost
- Multidisciplinary specialist autism services can provide good outcomes for people with autism. Professionals should offer carers support in their own right and work in partnership with them to provide the best possible assessment and service provision