

Autism Partnership Group
June 5th 2014
Shire Hall

Present

James Baker	Hereford Make CIC and Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Helen Boughen	Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Valerie Fitch	Hereford Carers Support, Person on the Autistic Spectrum and Parent
Colin Boughen	Parent
Jane Clayton	Parent
Paula Daniels Simmonds	Parent
Mary Godwin	Parent
Richard Green	Parent
Sally Green	Parent
Sue Black	Hereford Carers Support
Sylvia Nicholls	Chair Hereford Disability United (HDU)
Sara Soloko	HDU
Jonathon Williams	Herefordshire ASPIE LINK
David Malins	Herefordshire ASPIE LINK
Mandy Shrimpton	National Autistic Society – Hereford and Worcestershire branch
Cllr Chris Chappell	Advocate for people with Learning Disabilities
Les Knight	Head of Provider Services – Children’s Well Being - Additional Needs
Colin Jevons	Healthwatch
Lynne Renton	CCG
Carol Soble	Specialist Teacher for Complex Communication Difficulties
Sean Slater	2gether Trust
Stuart Blake	Herefordshire Recruitment
Neville Meredith	Equalities Team Herefordshire Council
Cllr Graham Powell	Cabinet Lead Adults Well Being
John Gorman	Commissioning Officer

Apologies;
Michelle Baillon
Catherine McGowan
Rose Hunt
Aubrey Baillie
Sue Little
Sue Riley
Cathy Meaney
Helen Webb
Bob Parker
Richard Gabb
Helen Coombes
Cllr Chris Chapple

Aubrey Baillie had been due to Chair this meeting but was unable to attend due to illness. Lynne Renton took the Chair. The meeting expressed its best wishes to Aubrey and wished him a swift recovery.

Previous minutes

John Gorman reported the following outcomes from the actions of the previous meeting;

- The minutes from the HDU seminar on autism in November had been circulated. It was noted that Sylvia Nicholls would address the meeting later about a second seminar to be held later this month.

Terms of reference (TOR)

- No views on the frequency of meetings and who should chair meetings had been fed back to John Gorman
- Draft governance arrangements for the group for inclusion in the TOR are still in discussion
- The draft TOR had been to be e-mailed to group members
- References in the TOR have been changed to 'People on the autism spectrum'

- It had been decided to keep the name 'partnership' for this group

- Les Knight had not received any ideas on how to make Universal services – (such as sports clubs) – more inclusive
- He also informed the meeting that the 'Local Offer' was still being finalised and that it would include Autism.

- John Gorman had included the Cohesion Team in this meeting (Neville Meredith in attendance)

- The draft action plan had not been circulated to the group – it was noted that the action plan was to be discussed at this meeting

- The Strategy has been signed off and is available on the council website

- It was confirmed that expenses were currently not available to members of this group. Sue Black said that to ensure inclusivity expenses should be available to those who incur costs in attending the meetings. Cllr Powell said that he would look at what the arrangements were for service users in other Partnership Groups and give the matter consideration

Action Point – Cllr Powell to report to John Gorman. John to disseminate to the group

The Minutes were proposed by Valerie Fitch and seconded by Sylvia Nicholls. The minutes were accepted unanimously.

Our Strategy – Progress and way forward

John Gorman spoke to the group about the Herefordshire Autism Strategy and Action Plan and said that the Action Plan needs to be further developed from the current draft document. There are eight priority themes in the draft Action Plan and it was agreed that where priorities were a direct responsibility of a statutory body (such as the CCG or the Council) these task groups should be asked to report regularly to the Partnership Group on progress.

The priorities that fall into this group include;

- The Diagnosis Pathway – this will be for the CCG to work with its partners (such as 2G) to implement;
- Transitions – this will be for Children’s Well Being to manage and develop;
- The Criminal Justice System
- Housing

These last two areas that the relevant teams will need to develop and report back to the Group on.

The remaining priorities;

- Increasing awareness of Autism,
- Information and support for carers and families,
- Planning and leadership
- Employment

are areas that, it was felt, the Partnership Group could more directly influence and develop themselves and it was agreed that task and finish groups be established to take forward the work on developing the actions to move these priorities forward.

Sylvia Nicholls noted that the next Hereford Disability United (HDU) seminar on June 25th will have a range of speakers covering many of the above priorities and she suggested that it would make sense if the seminar were to promote the task and finish group idea and spread the word – and work – to a wider audience. This was agreed as a good idea by the Group.

Actions;

Cllr Powell asked that the Group be reminded of the eight priorities

Action point – John Gorman to circulate the eight priorities to the Group

Valerie Fitch asked that the draft action plan also be circulated for information. John Gorman reminded the Group that the plan is still a draft and was not an agreed final document.

Action point – John Gorman to circulate the draft action plan to the Group

Action Point – Partnership Group members to consider the draft action plan and suggest amendments and ideas to be included

Task and Finish Groups – getting involved;

Action Point – anyone interested in talking part in a task and finish group to contact John Gorman and put their name forward.

Action Point – names of those on the Task and Finish Groups to be circulated – John Gorman

Action Point – John Gorman to circulate details of the Autism Seminar meeting on June 25th

Cllr Powell said that he would, where possible, encourage partner organisations to actively participate in the work of the task and finish groups and to attend future meetings of the Partnership Group.

The Revised National Strategy – what does it mean for us?

The meeting then heard from John Gorman about the recently refreshed national Autism Strategy. The revised strategy; “Think Autism Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives, the strategy for adults with autism in England: an update” identifies three key areas where the Government wants a particular drive and focus on to deliver change.

- Firstly, people with autism to be included as part of the community.

- Secondly, to promote innovative local ideas, services or projects which can help people in their communities through new models of care, particularly for “lower level” support for those not meeting eligibility criteria for statutory support.
- Thirdly, the need to focus on how advice and information on services can be joined up better for people

The meeting was told that the Herefordshire Strategy links well with these key areas.

To support the delivery of these key areas the revised strategy lists 15 Priority Challenges for Action. The 15 Priority Challenges are attached to these minutes for information at annex 1.

The meeting was told that the Herefordshire Strategy links reasonably well with these 15 Priority Challenges with the exception of two areas; Hate Crime and Equalities. These will be two areas in our strategy that will need to be developed.

It was noted that Neville Meredith would be speaking to the meeting later on Hate Crime.

The meeting was then told that included within the new National Strategy was an Autism Innovation Fund. It will be designed to support the delivery of some of the key themes set out in the updated National Strategy, including;

- Advice and information;
- Gaining and growing skills for independence;
- Early intervention and crisis prevention; and
- Employment, particularly involving the use of apprenticeships.

Further information about this fund is expected by the end of June 2014 and it is expected that the deadline for submission of bids will be before the next meeting of the Partnership Group. It was agreed therefore that a small group would be set up to write and submit bids on behalf of the Partnership Group.

Action Point – John Gorman to co-ordinate a Bid Group

Paula Daniels Simmonds suggested asking the Council’s Grant Team to help with bids and said that Dave Tristram would be a useful contact.

Les Knight suggested getting Alexia Heath involved

Cllr Powell said that the Herefordshire Strategy Action Plan will need to be in good shape in order to support any bids that are made.

James Baker noted that our work needs to dovetail with the Work of the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Strategic Economic Plan. Cllr Powell agreed but emphasised that our bids need to be focussed on the needs of Herefordshire.

Mandy Shrimpton outlined some ideas she was working on that might form the basis of a bid. The first idea would be for the training of Autism Champions to be located in key locations such as GP Surgeries. These champions would help train people in autism awareness as well as acting as a focal point for people on the spectrum. A second idea was for a service user led review team to ensure that all proposed services plans and strategies were considered from an Autism point of view. A third idea was the construction of a virtual Autism Hub to contain services such as diagnosis, advice information and so on.

Action Point – Members of the Partnership Group to submit ideas for bids to John Gorman

Action Point - John Gorman to send link to the revised National Strategy

Themes for discussion

Hate Crime

Neville Meredith spoke to the meeting about Hate Crime. He noted that a high proportion of Hate Crime go unreported and of those that are reported, a high proportion are not acted upon by the Police. He proposed that a group be set up specifically to look at Hate Crime. This group would advise people what to do should they become a victim of Hate Crime, work with the Police to ensure that Hate Crimes are followed up and action taken and thirdly, raise awareness of Hate Crime.

Action Point - It was agreed that Neville would set up and lead a Hate Crime group

Action Point – John Gorman to circulate Neville’s Contact details

Action Point – Partnership Group members to put themselves forward as members of the Hate Crime Group – names to be submitted to Neville Meredith

Safe Places – Neville passed on some information From Rose Hunt of Mencap who was unable to attend this meeting. Mencap now runs the Safe Place schemes which offers safe locations for people to go to get help if they are in trouble or distressed. Carol Soble asked if these locations would be Autism friendly. Sally Green also noted that there were often issues of physical contact when dealing with people of the Autism Spectrum.

Action Point – Lynne Renton said that said that she would ask Rose Hunt to ensure that training would be given to staff in Safe Place

Les Knight asked that any Hate Crime issues in schools be fed to him via Neville

There was discussion about the use of identification cards to help those on the Spectrum to make themselves known when in a difficult situation.

Action Point – Mandy Shrimpton to e-mail the Autism Passport to John Gorman for dissemination.

Employment

Stuart Blake spoke to the group about employment. He said that although there were vacancies available there is a skills gap which means that the vacancies often remain empty. What is needed is for employers to be more realistic about their requirements and for candidates to get more personalised help and advice on how to best present themselves for jobs.

Too often job seekers are told by Job Centre Plus to apply to every job in order to retain their benefits. Stuart told the meeting that he thought that there was too much generic advice which leads to one-dimensional CVs that do not help in the job application process. He would like to see more specific advice that is personal to the job seeker themselves and he proposed looking at a 12 week rolling programme to help people into employment. He suggested that a group could look at this to see what realistic individual support could be put together to help job seekers.

Valerie Fitch (and others) noted that people on the autism spectrum often prefer to be self-employed and that this might be an area of work that the group could look at.

Action point - Stuart agreed to be part of the task and finish group that would be looking at employment. Sylvia Nicholls and James Baker also asked to be on the group

Autism Seminar at HDU

Sylvia Nicholls repeated her earlier information regarding the next Hereford Disability United (HDU) seminar on June 25th. This seminar will have a range of speakers including Sean Slater from 2G and Ed Edwards from Childrens Well Being. The meeting is open to all comers.

AOB

Sarah Soloko asked about some work that had been done by Tanya Kirby called 'getting a life'

Action Point – John Gorman said he would try to find out what had happened to this work.

James Baker spoke about some Research work going on in London by the University College and said that they were looking for people on the Spectrum to take part in the work.

Action Point – John Gorman to circulate the flyer for this

Valerie Fitch asked how many people in Herefordshire were on the Autism Spectrum. Sean Slater noted that Aubrey Baillie had provided some latest estimates which had been incorporated into the Herefordshire Autism Strategy. John Gorman noted that social workers were now being asked to record on the council's record keeping system (Frameworki) where client had been diagnosed as being autistic. Carol Soble said that data on the numbers in schools on the Autism Spectrum were getting more reliable. This information is also in the Herefordshire Autism Strategy.

David Malins introduced an idea called 'Community Monitoring'. This is where people can use e-mail, social media, websites etc to access services. The data generated by these requests can be used to shape provision (it acts as a sort of needs analysis) so that planners can provide what people actually want.

Les Knight said that this fits well with the Local Offer that all councils have to provide under the Children's and Families Act. This Offer has to describe all the services available to people aged 0 to 25. He said that anything the Partnership Group did on providing information to people will need to link to and complement the Local Offer.

Lynne Renton noted that a priority for the Herefordshire Autism Strategy was improved information and support for families, carers and those on the spectrum and she thought that ideas such as 'Community Monitoring' might well be able to feed into the work of the task group that will be looking at this.

Colin Boughen asked what could be improve the provision of social activities. Mandy Shrimpton said that she was looking for volunteers to help run social events for people on the spectrum in the county. She also said that Aubrey Baillie has been looking at setting up e-mail groups for people to access and use.

Lynne Renton noted that this appeared to be a major issue for people on the spectrum and she suggested that developing social activities should be a topic for inclusion at the next Partnership meeting. This was agreed

Action Point – to be included on the next agenda

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be in late September or early October

Action Point – John Gorman to organise

Action Point – Group members to consider and suggest alternative locations for future meetings

Annex 1

The 15 Priority Challenges for Action

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.