

All Age Autism Strategy for Worcestershire

Points to feed into HWW Response

April 2015

Involvement of people with autism and carers in writing the Strategy -

- The strategy does not state what involvement people with autism have had in its development. It does not state that priorities have been identified with people with autism / their carers / co-produced.
- It says that the Autism Partnership Group were involved in developing the adult element of the strategy, however it does not state who belongs to this group or if it includes people with autism
- The period of consultation was very short - one month, which includes Easter
- No specific questions were asked to support people to give feedback - only general comments and feedback requested. We were told this was to minimise requirements of processing feedback, however for most people faced with a lengthy document, it will make it more difficult to provide feedback
- Not sure how widely the consultation has been publicised. Not aware of any specific events or focus groups.
- REGs member Our Voice had not received information directly from the County Council about the consultation. They feel that as approx. 80% of their members have children with autism they should have been a key point of feedback for the County Council.

Structure and layout of the Strategy -

- It states that the Strategy aims to '*outline an action plan of how work will be taken forward in the next three years*' - However the information focuses on background and what needs to be done better, rather than specific information about what will be done and how this will be achieved.
- There is no mention of who will be implementing the Strategy or how the work to achieve the aims will be funded
- The Strategy is quite long and not set out in a way that would be easy for people with autism or their carers to easily identify key points and priorities.

Feedback received about the content of the Strategy -

- Some areas of the Strategy are very general - e.g. improving access to employment and do not give any specific ways that this would be achieved or who will need to be involved / joint working with partners
- Assessment process resulting in care plan and support required (page 17-18)-
 - Will this be provided for those who have been assessed previously or just those new to the system?
 - What will be the impact of funding cuts on being able to provide the support required?
- Specialised training for those carrying out assessments - this has been highlighted as an important issue and something that does not currently happen. What will be the specific requirements / level of this training?
- Training for all staff working in education, health and social care - this is very important, but what level and format of training will be involved and how will this be funded?
- Pathway for diagnosis and support - there is no mention about the impact of capacity of other services on diagnosis - e.g. recent experience of wait for 10 months for CAMHS assessment to enable completion of Umbrella Assessment delaying diagnosis for a child.
- How will cuts to services such as the Autism and Complex Communication Difficulties Team impact on the strategy - feedback from school that visits from this team have been reduced due to capacity
- Needs a clearer commitment in the strategy to ensure there is support that those who do not meet the criteria for social care support or for children who do not receive an Education, Health and Care Plan, for example those with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. This is a particular concern at a time when financial climate / cuts mean that the County Council is reducing services down to those who they have a legal obligation to support.
 - *Our issues database shows issues from two parents with adult sons with Asperger syndrome with major mental health issues and lack of support. These are both parents I spoke to in a previous role 10 years ago when they were struggling to find any services as young adults / leaving education for them as because of their diagnosis of Asperger syndrome they did not meet the criteria for support services available.*