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| Meeting: | Children and young people scrutiny committee |
| Meeting date: | Monday 16 April 2018 |
| Title of report: | Herefordshire Autism Strategy |
| Report by: | Head of additional needs and Adults wellbeing commissioning manager |

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To enable the committee to fulfil its function to review and scrutinise the planning, provision and operation of health and social care services for people with Autism, and to make reports and recommendations on these matters. The committee identified the strategy as part of its work programme and requested the draft strategy was presented for preview.

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the autism strategy with a particular focus on children and young people and the actions required to improve services for those in the county on the autism spectrum. There are existing separate diagnostic pathways for both Children and Adults.

Recommendation(s)

That - the committee reviews those elements of the draft Autism strategy for Herefordshire 2018-2021 relating to children and young people and determines any recommendations it wishes to make to the executive or health commissioners which may enhance the effectiveness of the strategy.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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Alternative options

None. It is open to the committee to review the report and determine whether it wishes to make any recommendations.

Key considerations

1. It is estimated that 1.1% of the national adult population have autism (the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey). For Herefordshire, this would mean that approximately 2,000 people would fall within the autism spectrum. A recent study of the incidence of autism in children was estimated at 1% (Baron-Cohen et al; 2018).
2. Autism is a life-long disability which affects the lives of people with autism and their families. It can differ in terms of impact and severity, with some people at the mild end who are not formally diagnosed or not requiring formal support to people with moderate to severe autism and can also include learning disabilities. This can often require support with aspects of their daily living, including some who may require 24 hour support. Some people on the autism spectrum prefer to identify themselves as 'neurologically atypical' rather than being 'autistic'.
3. Good practice, as defined by national NICE Guidelines require that local areas define the process of diagnosing autism by means of a multi-professional diagnostic pathway. For children age up to the age of 10, a multi-disciplinary assessment is co-ordinated through the child development centre in Hereford. For children over the age of 10, the multi-disciplinary assessment is co-ordinated by the CAMHS Service at the Linden Centre in Hereford. The adult diagnostic pathway is co-ordinated through a regional centre in Bristol. The descriptions of these pathways have been drafted but now require multi-agency agreement.
4. The Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) currently individually commission a number of different services for children and young people with autism as well as adults with learning disabilities and autism.
 - For children and young people, these services include specialist schools and resource bases attached to a school, outreach to mainstream schools, speech and language and occupational therapy, independent travel training and other specialised help.
 - Services commissioned by adults include residential care homes, supported living, day opportunities as well as out-of-area special beds; nursing care and domiciliary care.
5. These services are commissioned from specialist providers across the education sector, the NHS and from the voluntary, independent and not-for-profit sectors as well as directly provided by the Council. Services for adults primarily focus on those adults with a learning disability who may also have autism. Herefordshire has not historically commissioned specialist services for adults with autism. Services have focussed on those who have the greatest difficulty in living independently. Although people with autism may have significant impairments that require support in certain aspects of living, most do not require the same level or type of support as those with significant learning difficulties.
6. The council has a duty to provide 'sufficient and suitable' educational provision to meet the needs of the population and to keep this under review. This includes provision to meet the

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needs of children and young people with autism. The continuum of educational provision is as follows:

- The majority of children with autism attend a mainstream early years setting, school or college. These educational settings make reasonable adjustment for disability and provide support and intervention up to the value of £6k per child. Additional top-up tariff funding is provided for those with education, health and care plans;
 - Specialist advice from the Early Years Advisers and the Autism Outreach Team from Hampton Dene Primary School.
 - Early years specialist Communication and Social Interaction (COSI) Group at the Child Development Centre (CDC), Hereford for those in their pre-school year.
 - Specialist resource bases at Hampton Dene Primary and The Bridge at the Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat School including specialist speech and language therapy support.
 - Local special school places for those children with severe and complex learning difficulties including autism.
 - For a very small number of children where we are not able to meet need locally, out of county placements (38 week day placements or 52 week residential placements) are made.
7. The provision has been kept under review with an additional group being added at the CDC COSI group in 2016 and an additional small KS1 class for autism at Hampton Dene resource base in 2015. Engagement with individual parents and an NAS parent group has indicated that this pattern of provision for some children with autism might not be fully meeting their needs. A full review of educational provision for those with autism will be an action within the autism strategy and will be cross-referenced in the schools capital investment strategy. A further aspect of making appropriate educational provision is the level of knowledge and expertise of the staff. It is intended that the delivery of additional high quality professional development with a focus on autism is a further action within the strategic action plan.
8. Children and young people diagnosed with autism do not automatically meet the criteria for an assessment of need for a service by the Children with Disabilities (CWD) social care team. However, where there is evidence of severe and complex need or multiple needs that include autism, children and their families would be eligible for an assessment. Those who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the CWD team might be assessed by other social care or early help teams if their needs suggest that is necessary
9. The council and the CCG additionally commission a range of health and wellbeing services for the wider population with the expectation they make reasonable adjustments to enable better access by people with autism. This includes services such as social housing, leisure services, public transport, primary healthcare, adult education, acute healthcare and other services across the NHS and council, plus the voluntary and private/independent sectors .
10. The degree to which reasonable adjustments are made currently vary from service to service. Members of the Partnership Board have, on an ongoing basis, been working with services such as the Police and GPs to raise awareness of autism and to highlight where reasonable adjustments to service provision of procedures might be made. A key theme of this revised strategy is to improve the level of awareness amongst all professionals and providers and to work with them to identify and make reasonable adjustments.
11. The Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire (WISH) service has been remodelled and contains information for children, young people and adults with autism along

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with their families. The information is available on the WISH website and will continue to be updated and added to as services are developed or additional information is identified. Organisations providing support may add their details to the resource register on the WISH website free of charge. Some of the content has been co-produced with the Autism Partnership Board and through other forms of engagement. WISH now incorporates the 'Local Offer' of information which is a statutory requirement for councils as defined in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Information Regulations (2014) and described in the Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2014).

12. The council has a growing role in market shaping and influencing community activity to increase their potential to offer opportunities for peoples with autism. A growing, but still small, number of people with autism directly commission their own services by using their personal budget in the form of a direct payment. A small number of families of children with complex needs that include autism have made the choice to take a direct payment in lieu of a commissioned service which offers the family a short break.
13. This legislation and guidance seeks to create real changes in the lives of people with autism through changes to service design and the commissioning culture. The combined aim of these changes is to enable people with autism to have greater choice over how and by whom they are supported, how they are educated, where and with whom they live, access to paid work and real training, have a real social role, improve long-term health and have ordinary expectations about relationships, families and being part of a community.
14. The council has worked with the CCG and partners across the autistic community in the county to co-produce a comprehensive outcome-focused Autism Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to jointly consider the delivery of opportunities by a wide range of parties. The timetable for the strategy is to be considered for approval by cabinet on the 10 May 2018 and to also be ratified by the CCG governance board on the 22 May 2018.
15. The Autism Strategy for 2018-21:
 - a. Sets out the outcomes and actions required for the individual and the wider autism community, linking them to guidance, legislation and to the wider strategic aims of the council and the clinical commissioning group;
 - b. Ensures that all commissioned activity for and with people with autism is aligned to the health and wellbeing blueprint for adult social care, the council's aim of keeping all children safe and giving them the best start in life, and with the NHS's long-term commitment to ensure reasonable adjustments are made in both primary and acute health services.

16. The strategy is 'all-age' meaning that it is relevant to children, young people as well as adults with autism and their families. The outcomes include:
- Making sure that everyone is as healthy and well as they can be;
 - Making sure that everyone has access to appropriate educational provision so they can fulfil their potential as learners;
 - Making sure families and unpaid carers get the help and support they need;
 - Making sure that everyone can access transport, high quality housing and suitable employment opportunities;
 - Making sure that we are all safe in our communities.
17. The strategic themes have been developed and agreed by the Autism Partnership Board building on the themes of the first Autism Strategy for Herefordshire, originally published in 2014. The 2014 strategy focused on both adults and children with ASD and set out to deliver the following outcomes;
- Increasing awareness and understanding for those who provide services to people with ASD.
 - Improved identification and diagnosis of ASD in children and adults, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services.
 - Improved transition planning in relation to the provision of services to people with ASD as they move from being children to adults.
 - Local planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for adults and children with ASD.
 - Support for parents, families and carers.
 - Appropriate support for people with ASD in the criminal justice system.
 - Getting the right housing and housing related support for those with ASD
 - Helping people with ASD into employment and training.
18. The new draft strategy 2018-2021 (Appendix 1) outlines what has been achieved in the 2014-17 strategy. It is intended that the Autism Partnership Board takes the lead on monitoring of the 2018-21 action plan and reviews the work delivered across the county by a range of partners. The action plan, which is organised by strategic theme, identifies actions through information gained from joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA; see page 31), the children's integrated needs assessment and engagement with a range of service users, their families and practitioners. Details of the finding from the engagements can be found in appendix 3 of the strategy. It also contains detailed impact measures by which the strategy can be baselined and subsequent progress measured (Appendix 2).
19. The Partnership Board meets on a quarterly basis and is well attended. It is chaired by someone who is autistic and its membership is made up of people with autism, their families and carers, the CCG, the police, 2Gether, service providers as well as council representation from both adults and children's directorates.
20. It will be the role of the board to report to the Joint Commissioning Board on progress being made and to widely communicate the strategy to key partners.

Community impact

21. The long-term nature of many of Herefordshire Council's responsibilities mean that we should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. The council achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these is an important strategic choice to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. The council needs robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure our outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best use of resources while still enable efficient and effective operations.
22. The council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development, and review.
23. The committee's considerations should have regard to what improves services for children and young people across Herefordshire. In doing so, the committee will wish to go beyond the pure data on process performance in order to consider the impact on the wellbeing of people with autism in Herefordshire and their experience of commissioned services in line with the corporate plan priorities, the health and wellbeing strategy and the children and young people plan.

Equality duty

24. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
25. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation. In order to meet the requirements a-c the strategy will focus on raising awareness and understanding of autism, this will help to support people into employment, and accessing mainstream services

Resource implications

26. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. The resource implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the commissioner responses.

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Legal implications

27. The council is under a legal duty to produce an autism strategy for adults. This requirement is detailed in the Adult Autism Strategy: Statutory Guidance (2015).
28. With regard to children and young people the Children and Families Act 2014 provides that councils are under a duty to make educational provision for young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to age 25.
29. The work of the council and the CCG in relation to adults is directed by a range of legislation such as the National Autism Plan for Children (2003), The Autism Act (2009), the National Autism Strategy 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' (2010), the Equality Act 2010, National Autism Strategy (2010) and the Adult Autism Strategy: Statutory Guidance (2015). The Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2014) provides statutory guidance in relation to Children and Young People aged 0-25 years.
30. The council is under a legal duty to provide an overview and scrutiny function in accordance with Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.
31. The remit of scrutiny committees is set out in part 3 Section 4 of the constitution. Paragraph 2.6.7 provides that scrutiny committees have the power to scrutinise the services provided by organisations outside the council eg NHS services, under the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.
32. Scrutiny functions are outlined in Section 4 paragraph 3.4.1 of the constitution, including at paragraph 3.4.2(g) the power to review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in its area and make reports and recommendations to a responsible person on any matter it has reviewed or scrutinised or to be consulted by a relevant NHS body or health service provider in accordance with the Regulations (2013/218) as amended. In this regard health service includes services designed to secure improvement —
 - (i) in the physical and mental health of the people of England, and
 - (ii) in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental illness.
33. Paragraph 4.5.5 of the Constitution provides for co-option and voting rights stating that education co-optees may vote on items relating to education, Therefore education co-optees on Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are entitled to vote on this item as it relates to education.

Risk management

34. There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.
35. The council needs to have an autism strategy to ensure it is fulfilling its statutory function and it will ensure that the needs of people with autism are raised across all stakeholders and the general public.

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36.

| Risk / opportunity | Mitigation |
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| Performance management could be focused on process measures that are not reflective of the wellbeing and experience of the person. | The committee seeks to focus its attention on matters of direct relevance to people with autism living in Herefordshire and ensure performance measures reflect these within the action plan. |

Consultees

37. A wide range of partner organisations have been consulted on in the development of the draft strategy:

- Herefordshire CCG
- West Mercia Police
- Herefordshire Carers
- Hereford Disability United
- National Autistic Society – Hereford Branch
- Herefordshire Autism Partnership Board
- Herefordshire Healthwatch
- Herefordshire Council Childrens Wellbeing
- Herefordshire Council Adults Wellbeing

38. A public facing engagement exercise was conducted during the summer of 2017. It was aimed at people with autism and their families and carers, although it was open for anyone to respond to. It was available as a hard copy paper version or on line through the Herefordshire NAS website. People were also asked a series of specific questions dealing with the priority areas to help the Autism Board identify which were the key areas of development needed to be addressed by the strategy and action plan. In total 60 responses were received. 49 were through the website, 11 were hard copy responses, further information can be found in appendix 3 of the strategy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Herefordshire Autism Strategy 2018-2021

Appendix 2: Autism presentation for scrutiny.

Background papers

None identified.

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