

Report of the Senior Officer, Strategy, Change and Delivery, NHS Bradford District and Craven Clinical Commissioning Group to the meeting of the Health and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28 July 2021

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Subject: ADULT AUTISM

Summary statement:

This report provides an update on the current state vis-à-vis adult autism and also provides a synopsis of the work planned to address 'all age autism' and therefore, address some of the challenges that are outlined in this paper

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1. Summary

This report provides an update on the current state vis-à-vis adult autism and also provides a synopsis of the work planned to address 'all age autism' and therefore, address some of the demand pressures and system challenges outlined in this paper.

2. Background

INTRODUCTION

HOSC have requested an update on adult autism which this paper seeks to provide. At a system level, health and social care are working closely with other key partners to develop and implement an 'all-age' autism neuro diversity pathway that aims to provide a joined-up experience for those citizens that require an autism assessment.

The recently formed *Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neuro Diversity Programme Board* has prioritised 'all-age' neuro diversity and endorsed the development of an all-age autism strategy as one of its key programmes. A revised 'all-age' neuro diversity strategy will help Bradford District and Craven determine what the baseline is, what progress is being made and how the system needs to change in order to provide the best possible service for our local population. It will outline what further systemic pathway development and resource is needed to address the increase in demand and complexity of referrals.

The 'all-age' strategy will focus on the wide breadth of services that touch the lives of people and families affected by neuro diversity. It aligns with the Autism Act 2009 and Department of Health national strategy and associated statutory guidance. It sets clear recommendations with the intention of integrating and aligning support services across health, VCS and social care. This will ensure individuals; families and carers can better navigate the system with greater ease and have singular conversations as opposed to the same conversation many times.

The 'all age' strategy will set out a number of key priority areas that will be co-designed with service users, families and carers. The benefit of co-producing the solutions with service users, families and carers is that it ensures equal collaboration between those affected by our services and those charged with the responsibility to deliver. A key tenet of co-design is that service users, families and carers are engaged as '*experts of their own lived experience*'. This strategy takes into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on autistic people and their families' lives, as we know this has been very challenging for many. We know that the pandemic has highlighted the health inequalities that are blighting our district, but it has also increased these inequalities. This also means that intersecting factors such as disability, income, age, race, gender, sexual orientation and other identities can be addressed when designing access to and delivery of services.

The Autism Strategy sits within the Act as One operating model for shared programmes across the Bradford District and Craven health and care system. Our strong relationships and history of partnership working is key to helping us meet these challenges.

Our 'all-age' service will cover the following priorities:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Collection/ analysis |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding autism |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining a pathway • Learning Disabilities/ Mental Health |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Transitions into adulthood |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment support |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coproduction working with people with lived experience, their families and carers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older People |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undiagnosed and late diagnosis |

The 'all age' strategy is a 5 year ambitious plan with a view to focusing on the following 3 areas in the first year;

Undiagnosed and late diagnosis

- Ensure access to assessment and diagnosis process available to all ages
- Ensure families/carers are supported to access diagnosis where it is felt it would be beneficial to the individual

Defining a Pathway

- Create a multidisciplinary team providing a service to adults with an autism spectrum condition (ASC) and the services that support them. The key aims of the service are to help people with an ASC to access a range of appropriate mainstream services and to improve the ability of these services to work effectively and efficiently with this group
- A coherent pathway for children and adults that provides continuity of care
- Ensure clear information is available to parents/carers about the assessment pathway prior to the actual diagnostic process being undertaken and how they can contribute to this
- Ensure at point of referral that effective signposting and support is given for current need including guidance sheet/advice
- In relation to children better triangulation with schools at an early stage could be developed (i.e. could they be supported/trained to do the observation which is required before diagnosis given)
- The role of key workers/navigators should be explored to support families through the process

Understanding Autism

- Develop a 5 year Training Plan for the District which includes all public services
- Establish a "charter" to demonstrate commitment within an organisation to be autism friendly
- Undertake a Training Needs Analysis across all services to ensure we have a shared understanding of Autism
- Develop as a minimum a standard awareness training pack
- Consider changes to estates/environments to ensure appropriate to need

Progress to date

We are at the early stages of building on the work from inequality to opportunity we now have a proposal for an expanding programme of place-based 'trailblazers', aiming to shift us from a fragmented system in which children, families and adults can only unlock support through diagnosis, and interactions with multiple services, to one in which a combination of data tools, public education, staff training and co-production allow secure information sharing between practitioners, and collaboration to identify and meet many/most needs earlier. In this system, diagnosis will remain important and available but will be prioritised to where it is essential to defining support requirements. The proposal recognises the potential for schools and education sites to accelerate and improve access to children and families, and the benefit of shifting interactions out of clinical spaces. The trailblazers will be targeted to Bradford's most disadvantaged communities, because this work will spearhead the broader, collaborative response to inequality set out by the strategic plan 'From inequality to opportunity'. The next phase of activity will see us modelling the interactions required in our localities to confirm the data, tools, permissions and resources required.

3. Report issues

CURRENT PICTURE

NHS Bradford District and Craven Clinical Commissioning Group (BDCCCG) and the main provider of assessment services for adults with autism, Bradford District Care Foundation Trust (BDCFT) have together revised the service specification to improve the pathway and ensure a more effective triage and assessment processes are in place. The Bradford and Airedale Neuro Diversity Service has been working closely with Primary Medical Care (GPs) to improve the quality of referrals which enable speedier signposting and appropriate support for service users. A 'top tips' information leaflet is in development phase to provide greater clarity on referral pathways.

Since re-opening the adult autism service demand has grown exponentially and 359 referrals have been received to date. The number of assessments that have been completed is 91 which means that we have significant waiting times. BDCFT continue to address the waiting list; the service has adapted to ensure service continuity during COVID remains on track by introducing video consultations and adopting dragon software to deal with assessments expeditiously. BDCFT is also exploring ways to continuously improve the quality of referrals to maximise pathway outcomes.

SYSTEM CHALLENGES

1. Understanding and addressing the impact of COVID on our adult population who are waiting for an autism assessment, particularly those who may be unable to take part in on-line assessments.

2. Addressing the lengthy waiting list
3. Responding to casework complexity which has a direct impact on the number of cases that can be assessed.
4. Increasing the resilience of the BANDS team

NEXT STEPS

1. Assess and address demand, resource and resilience of BANDS issues as they emerge, within the context of the Act as One framework.
2. Refine pathway to maximise outcomes and outputs
3. Implement an 'all age' neuro diversity pathway.

4. **Options**

Members may wish to comment on any aspect of the report.

5. **Recommendations**

1. The challenges regarding adult autism are discussed and noted.
2. The development of an 'all age' pathway that is prefaced with stronger prevention and early help is endorsed.

6. **Background documents**

➤ None

7. **Not for publication documents**

➤ None

8. **Appendices**

None