

Current picture of autism in the UK

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The journey to get here

- We are soon to see England's first ever strategy for adults with autism
- An exciting but challenging time for adults with autism
- The *I Exist* campaign
 - 63% of adults with autism do not have the support to meet their needs
 - 60% of parents say that a lack of support has led to higher support needs in the long run
 - 33% of adults with autism have experienced a severe mental health problems because of a lack of support
 - 15% of adults with autism have a full-time, paid job
- The Autism Bill
 - Statutory guidance for local authorities and PCTs to accompany strategy

The challenges and the opportunities

Accessing support

Challenges:

- In most local authorities services are structured such that adults with autism 'fall through the gaps'
- Lack of expertise and leadership at a local level
- Lack of 'low-level' services

Opportunities:

- Establish specialist autism teams locally
- Teams would:
 - Help build capacity in learning disability and mental health services
 - Sign-post people to appropriate services
 - Provide 'low level' services, like social skills training

Accessing diagnostic services

Challenges:

- Only 14 PCTs offer specialist autism diagnostic services for adults in England
- 54% of local authorities believe that adults with autism who have a diagnosis are more likely to receive support than those without one
- Post-diagnostic support is lacking

Opportunities

- Specialist autism teams would provide diagnosis locally:
- Multi-agency assessments that feeds into the care assessment process
- Post-diagnostic support offered locally by same team

‘Don’t write me off’ campaign

Challenges

- One third without a job and benefits
- Only 15% in full time job
- 79% on incapacity benefit want to work
- 82% who applied for benefit say they needed support

Opportunities

- ESA to work for people with autism
- Jobcentre Plus staff to understand the needs of people with autism
- A national strategy to transform access to employment

Strategic planning

Challenges:

- Only 9 out of 150 Joint Strategic Needs Assessments even mention autism
- Very few services suitable for adults with Asperger syndrome or High-functioning autism
- Inappropriate services offered to adults with autism and a learning disability

Opportunities:

- Autism Planning Group to be set up in each local area
- Attended by health and social care commissioners, service managers, voluntary sector, people with autism and carers
- Identify and address gaps in provision

Ensuring delivery

Challenges:

- Ensuring leadership and accountability at all levels
- Tough financial climate and tight budgets

Opportunities:

- Robust statutory guidance for local authorities and PCTs
- Clear structures of accountability, locally, regionally and nationally
- NAO report demonstrates that effective support can save millions

Next steps

- We will be involved in ongoing discussions with DH as the strategy is developed.
- We are encouraged by the commitment shown so far, but there is some way to go.
- Let's make sure that we see follow-through with a strong strategy and robust guidance to really improve outcomes for adults with autism