

**Autism partnership steering group**  
**10 May 2016, St Mary's Church - Bramall Lane**

**Attendees (and organisation)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Carolyn Bealby	
Donna Turner	Sheffield City Council (SCC), Learning and Development Officer
Ed Sexton – Facilitator	SCC, Development Manager, Communities
Emily Morton	Disability Sheffield
Gill Heddershaw– Minutes	SCC, Business Support
Grace Parry	
Heather Burns	Clinical Commissioning Group, Head of Commissioning, Mental Health
Jayne Hurdley	Autism Centre for Supported Employment
Jo Ball	Sheffield Adult Autism and Neurodevelopmental Service (SAANS)
Joe Fowler	SCC, Director of Commissioning, Communities
John Kirkman	
Kate Bradshaw	
Kathryn Littlewood	Disability Sheffield
Laura-Jayne Walker	
Liz Friend	Sheffield Autistic Society
Martin Nolan	SCC, Advanced Practitioner
Patricia Lowe	SCC, Business Support
Roger Guymer	
Susan Kirkman	
Suzanne Rutter	SCC, Communications and Partnership Officer
Sylvia Johnson	

**Apologies**

Graham Nield

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Ed welcomed all to the meeting, everyone introduced themselves and apologies were sent. He spoke about what the discussion aimed to achieve and the hope that everyone would feel able to contribute.

**2. Background to Autism Partnership and work over the last year**

Ed stated that we were to look at the background to the Autism Partnership and record the discussion. Key points and other comments would also be captured – *(appendix 1 sent with these notes)*.

Joe Fowler stated that two years ago a small group was formed to look at co-ordinating things within the Board as membership was diminishing and we were struggling for energy and what to do next.

A year ago priorities were discussed for 2015/16. A summit was designed to bring people together as they were frustrated with the pace of things, although it was recognised that it does take a lot of time to put things in place. Over the last year workstreams had been looked at, and the council have seen substantive changes. He also stated that the council had gifted some land to use for building accommodation for people with ASD. He also stated that there had been real dramatic shifts in Care and Support Services and the tightening up of funding had shown a large impact.

Susan Kirkman asked if Joe could be more specific and he stated that they were also looking at Social Work Resourcing and Training in Sheffield City Council. He stated there was frustration at what resources were available, due to last year's changes, and asked how we should take action. Susan stated that volunteers can't do this without support and will we be in the same position in six months' time.

Grace Parry added that accommodation being built needed careful planning as people on the autism spectrum need peace and quiet. Grace said she could offer advice to housing teams on this issue, and she left her contact details.

- **Action – Ed** to pass on Grace's details to relevant housing team

Martin Nolan asked about funding and resources – and wanted to know exactly where the money had been spent. Joe said it had gone to the Care Purchasing budget, as the increase in people coming forward with Asperger's had gone from two or three cases to 47 cases, and this was being covered by Mental Health Support. This had caused many pressures on the budget.

Laura-Jayne Walker stated that she was part of the Training and Employment Workstreams, and they had been working with Disability Sheffield, which had been quite successful. She would like some feedback in the development of the Sheffield Directory, and she asked if we could start looking at a Directory specifically for Autism, and try to raise awareness on the Autism Respect Campaign.

- **Action – all** are invited to review the Sheffield Directory following work which has been done to enhance the look and feel of the website <http://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk>

Laura-Jayne wondered how we would go forward on this and did we need posters or leaflets printing? What training is currently available for this? She also stated that some people on the autism spectrum would not like to attend meetings as they would find them difficult.

Sylvia Johnson shared a handout summarising the work of the employment workstream – (*appendix 2 sent with these notes*).

The points raised by the discussion were:

- The workstream has 10 members who have attended meetings.
- The workstream has held four meetings and is now planning to meet every other month.
- Having identified some initial priorities, these were discussed in more detail and a considerable amount of research was done into what is currently happening and available within Sheffield and the region.
- Members have contributed to creating some adult 'ready for work' profiles and a document outlining the benefits to employers of employing autistic adults, following meetings with Chris Shaw (SCC Director of Health Improvement) and Eve Waite (SCC Head of Employment & Skills).
- There has been discussion too about how the 'My fair city employer charter' could be articulated as it applies to autistic adults, (this was a private sector initiative replacing the 'Two Ticks' scheme).
- One member also invited a representative of the DWP Job Centre Plus to attend a meeting and explain what is on offer through DWP.
- Members have also identified many existing resources available to support people on the autism spectrum into work and are currently examining how best such a map and its associated pathways could be represented.
- Challenges and barriers still exist to improved employment of people on the autism spectrum. There was felt to be little influence to be had just by a group of willing volunteers, without key partners present who are committed to changing and improving practises in their areas.
- There also has to be a commitment to some resource for communication and dissemination of any outputs to relevant groups – be they people on the autism spectrum themselves and their families and carers, or employers in the area and other agencies related to increasing job opportunities and health improvement outcomes.
- If this work is to be sustainable then there needs to be a much stronger commitment from partners to support this work. Without that this group will just dwindle away.
- The message from all this is a lot of work has been done but will die if partners don't join in.

Roger Guymer stated that at the last employment workstream meeting a Disability Employment Advisor was present and made a good contribution. Susan Kirkman stated that there should be a willingness in the DWP at the top level to get someone important on board.

It was stated that on the employment side, Sylvia had done an amazing job. It was noted that funding for employment support seemed only available for some people within their personal budgets.

Heather Burns stated that there was pressure on the purchasing budget, but that learning events had been held for GPs to focus on mental health, learning disabilities and autism. She stated that we need to put in place more effective post-diagnostic support as people are struggling to have their first diagnosis and condition finalised. There had been half a million pounds of investment into SAANS. Recruiting the right calibre of staff had been difficult. There had not been many diagnoses amongst

younger people (up to 25s). There had been high referrals from the universities. Heather also said the service will go back out to tender and the new contract will be in place from 1 October 2016.

The feedback from the meeting was that the service needs to be flexible as children with autism are not referred on to adult support/services. Support doesn't have to be provided by a clinician.

Laura stated that she was diagnosed later in life and her experience of the post-diagnostic service was excellent. Laura also spoke at length about having a Multi-Disciplinary Assessment to create an autistic profile.

Roger stated that 1.1% of 550,000 people in Sheffield are estimated to be on the autistic spectrum, roughly 6,000 people. The difficulty was identifying these people as lots of them go under the radar. The age, gender and ethnicity of this population needed to be looked into.

Heather stated there has been a review of the LD Community Team – looking to the new national model. We need to transform care and prevent the need for people to go into hospital.

### **3. Why do we want a partnership and what do we want it to achieve?**

Roger stated that the Autism Summit had definitely reached a wider group of people but said there were more challenges ahead. More online information was needed but also other mediums as some people have difficulty with online information. The partnership should consider issues like finance, housing, transport and leisure. Key partners should be involved – e.g. Chamber of Commerce. There should be a full time job of Autism co-ordinator.

Joe stated Council staff had been reduced by a third and resources were stretched – e.g. an officer supporting the Health and wellbeing Board would only get two to three hours a week on it.

Roger stated that he was formerly a member of the Lancashire Autism Partnership Board and found that to be a lot more successful as more partners were involved. He handed round a list of things he thought would improve our partnership meetings – (*appendix 3 sent with these notes*).

Susan stated that she thinks parents and carers get passed from person to person and something has to happen to get a better deal, needs are not being met. She was concerned about people with learning disabilities as well as autism.

Roger stated that the scope is to think big and broader, and this has to cover a whole range of issues. He argued that the scope of the partnership was defined by the Autism Act and national strategy.

Sylvia asked what purpose the Equality Hubs were set up for. Joe told her that the changes in strategy were to hold people to account, he also stated that Roger had

made a good argument with his list of pointers from Lancashire and that there should be a potential for a wider group of people to be involved in the partnership in Sheffield.

Heather stated that the partnership should include the needs of people who also have learning disabilities. She suggested focusing on a few areas to begin with and start from there, e.g. –

- Employment
- Housing

The next step is to focus on what 'mainstream' services can offer. She asked that the notes from the meeting reflect the different views about the partnership.

Joe stated that he does not have much time (literally minutes to spare) and it is not realistic for him to spend a lot of time a week on a partnership board. However he said that there would need to be resources for this. John Kirkman stated that without this, nothing will happen. He thought that the Council is not listening and it's a case of 'them and us.'

Martin asked if a voluntary support co-ordinator could cover this but others felt it was an enormous volume of work and, in order to have authority and access, it could not be voluntary work. He stated we need to achieve action and improvement in the employment workstream, which needs to be open and accessible.

Heather stated that accountability and statutory responsibilities are with the Council but resources were stretched and we are in different and difficult financial times, and we need to prioritise.

Susan said we could take pointers from 'Think Autism' as this is more creative and suggests ways to make progress that don't cost a lot of money. Joe reiterated that the Council had bought land at Bole Hill to build housing for people with autism.

Martin stated that, from his social work perspective, we are failing people with autism in Sheffield miserably. The staffing is bad and people have been waiting over a year to be assessed.

#### **4. Which partnership model and who needs to be involved?**

Ed asked Roger to talk to us about the Lancashire model. Roger shared a summary – *(appendix 4 sent with these notes)*.

Roger said he was a member of this Board from 2011 to 2012 until he moved to live in Sheffield. He stated there was clear leadership and it worked. They divided the work between sub groups, and there were between 20 and 30 people at these meetings every time.

Joe agreed there would be a need to involve more partners (e.g. Police). Roger asked if the public could be more involved in initiatives and that meetings should be

open. Heather stated that the 'Partners for Inclusion' model could be replicated – when PFI was set up, it had a small core executive but wider partnership events that were open to the public.

Martin added because Lancashire is a county that would be one reason why their Board was more successful, because Sheffield is a smaller area. But it could extend to include Rotherham, Barnsley, Chesterfield and Doncaster, to have the same impact, resources permitting.

Sylvia stated that a public website would be useful, capitalising on things that are already in place. Liz Friend stated that Sheffield Autistic Society do a lot of work with adults with Asperger's and added that Roger's Lancashire model would work well in Sheffield. She would like to see someone from Sheffield City Council looking into this.

Joe agreed that an autism partnership is needed and that communication is key. Emily had looked into what models were operating elsewhere – they were mainly traditional models, with closed or open meetings. She also stated that the National Autistic Society had information about partnerships – (*appendix 5 sent with these notes*).

Roger stated that there should be work on providing social skills and preventative work, and we need to be thinking about this. Joe stated in relation to prevention that the Council's community support services are developing skills in floating support. Sylvia added that we need to get the private housing sector and service providers on board.

## **Next steps**

Roger suggested a large steering group implementing decisions. Ed thanked everyone for their time. He stated that he would bring together the key issues from the meeting with the notes and send round. It was agreed that further discussions were needed. The group could continue to act as the steering group to develop plans, but there also needed to be wider involvement – particularly from people on the autism spectrum.

- **Action – Ed** to arrange for notes, key actions and other the other papers referred to above to be sent to the group.
- **Action – Ed** to arrange for a further steering group meeting to be set up.