

Autism Network Scotland Activity Overview

Sharing and Learning

Colleagues know and understand the regular and routine business that the Network undertakes. Whilst this continues and is increasing, this paper highlights three specific achievements since our last meeting which illustrate the complexity and diversity of our workload.

Firstly, we spent a week in Shetland, at their request, to support the implementation of the local area strategy and to discuss ways of building capacity across mainstream services. A range of meetings took place with education, health and social care colleagues, where they were able to enhance their knowledge of each other's roles and responsibilities and to place the local strategy in a national context. In addition, they were introduced to several of the tools that the Network is expert in delivering, such as the Menu of Interventions, Principles of Good Transition 2 and the Autism Toolbox.

Staff were really appreciative of the opportunity afforded to them through this experience and are confident that they will be better able to serve people with autism and their families in the future.

The second achievement has been the hosting of the first ever conference in Scotland to focus on the needs and wishes of women and girls with autism. It was attended by over 60 participants and was a unique and sensitive experience in terms of quiet reflection and confidence building.

Outcomes from this event include:

- The collation of information regarding diagnosis and supports specific to women, to be fed into the work currently being undertaken by NES and contributing to Working Group 1.
- Opportunities for women with autism to inform practice in relation to points of transition across the lifespan, contributing to Working Group 2.
- Opportunities for women with autism to network and provide peer support and engage with the work of the National Strategy.
- The identification of further learning events which focus on women. The next event is planned for October 2015.

The third new area of involvement was enhancing the profile of autism within the University of Strathclyde itself, through a project entitled *Engage*. This is a weeklong exercise where university staff are asked to showcase a contribution of their choice. We elected to ask providers to come and discuss how they could better support people with autism and their families. The day was highly participative and successful, resulting in an agreement to form a provider's forum to continue collaborating on developing good practice.

In summary, the impact and outcomes overall in recent months are:

- Increasing knowledge of the work of the strategy at local and national levels.
- Enhancing understanding of interface between local and national strategies.
- Building confidence and appreciation that things are moving forwards and improving and that views/experiences will be taken into account, and that people on the autism spectrum and families and carers are included and contributions valued.

- Motivation via positive examples of where influence has worked.
- Opportunities to discuss priorities and share ideas for how to improve collaborative working and channels for communication.
- Gaining knowledge and understanding of how and where people on the autism spectrum and their families and carers would like to engage with strategy work.
- Gaining understanding of the benefits/downfalls of existing mechanisms for two-way communication.
- Ideas for how to improve and increase opportunities for engagement, and how this can be facilitated.
- Greater understanding of priorities for people with autism and their families and carers.