

Briefing for Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-committee Development of a Joint All Age Autism Strategy - Responses

Overview

Consultation on the Southwark Autism Strategy sought feedback from local people with autism, parent carers and professionals.

The full strategy and a summary document were circulated with a link to an online survey. Hard copies of the survey were also available. Email comments were encouraged.

In addition four consultation meetings were held on 16 September 2015. One meeting specifically for professionals, one for parent carers and people with autism, and the others were for open access.

In total, 72 responded to the consultation. There were 14 attendees at the consultation meetings, 49 online survey responses, 7 email comments and 2 organisations.

Responses to the 13 questions submitted:

1. We are satisfied that we had sufficient responses to the consultation, with a total of 72 having been received, 14 on the consultation day, 56 online and consultation with two specialist teams.
2. Further Education does not fall within the responsibility of Southwark Council and we have limited influence in this area. We do however intend to include education as a key component in developing the 0-25 Pathway

There are 2 Further Education Colleges in the borough funded by the Skills Funding Agency, sponsored by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (with a total of 160 SEN clients (100 LESCO and 60 Orchard House) currently in attendance.

3. There are many avenues of SENCo engagement from the formal training and support mechanisms to the email, phone, and local offer information level.

All SENCos are now highly trained teachers and must have or be studying for their masters qualification to work as a SENCo. This is mandatory.

All information about pre-diagnosis, referral pathways for diagnosis are on the Southwark Local Offer.

If a SENCo requires direct advice and support there are a number of avenues:

- SEN Senior Advisor in the School Standards team
- Inclusion and Monitoring Team in SEN that run termly SENCo forums and training courses throughout the school year and offer support and information over the phone, by email etc.
- Early Help team
- The Early Autism Support team for under 5s
- The School aged autism support team

All would signpost to the social communication clinic at Sunshine House for diagnosis.

4. Education will form part of the project board going forward. Professional involvement was sought as part of the consultation period with feedback from social and health care and education professionals.(44 professionals responded to the survey)
5. It has been a challenge to get an agenda item on the Headteachers' Executive however we have identified another meeting, the Southwark Headteacher's Briefing which is attended by c40 schools, meeting 1/2 termly. We will endeavour to incorporate this forum in the next steps of the strategy.
6. We note this issue and the organisation you mention and we will endeavour to incorporate these within the 0-25 Pathway. Independent living organisations will feature in the accommodation strategy.
7. The majority of our training is provided by the council's Organisational Development team. We currently provide a mixture of elearning and face to face training. Listed below are examples of face to face training we provide:
 - Supporting Children with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome
 - Working with Emerging sexuality
 - Communicating with Children with Disabilities
 - Southwark Foster Carers – Understanding Autism in Children
 - Orient Street Short Breaks Training
 - Autism and Asperger's Awareness Training for LBS Staff
8. We will ensure that any future questions/documents are worded in a way to encourage discussion and are produced in an "easy read" format.
9. A project board will be set up to monitor the implementation of the strategy and it is intended that an "expression of interest" will be sent to appropriate organisations in order to get a facilitator for the programme.
10. Comments are acknowledged and will be incorporated in the strategy
11. 44% of the respondents to the strategy were from parent carers of those with autism
12. Analysis of our current clients show that there are 66 clients with autism as a primary diagnosis receiving long term support

The average number of people in receipt of long-term services who were reported as autistic based on SALT submissions from London Boroughs (including people with "Asperger's Syndrome or High Functioning Autism") is 75 with a range from 0 to 194.

This places Southwark as average amongst our peers however we anticipate that our performance will improve through the implementation of this strategy
13. We will endeavour to accommodate this within 0-25 Pathway.

Summary

Since this strategy was first developed, the council and CCG have made a commitment to explore the opportunity to develop a new pathway for people 0-25 with disabilities. Given

autism will fall within this pathway; it would be counterproductive to implement the strategic aims for autism in isolation to this work. The actions required from this strategy will therefore be incorporated into the pathway development work.

Actions for those over 25 will be incorporated into the pathway development work as part of the transition into adult services.

Jay Stickland
Director of Adult Social Care
4th December 2015

Appendix

Autism strategy – Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Sub-committee summary of the discussion of the scrutiny session held on 15 September with follow up questions and comments.

14. Members asked about the consultation day and who was booked on, and if an additional Saturday would be considered, or north or south of borough. The Assistant Director said that if more days were needed, they would be added, however the service needed to be mindful of resources, hence only one location in the centre of the borough had been booked as other places in the north and south had been prohibitively expensive.

Despite the committee’s specific request for consultation events other than at Cambridge House that is the only consultation event that took place, at Cambridge House on one day. 4 groups were scheduled; Councillor Whittam went to the last one and was the only person there. This may mean that:

- *Not many people were interested*
- *Everyone else who was interested went to other sessions*
- *People who were interested could not get to the location*
- *People who were interested could not do that date.*

No further dates were added or additional consultation booked with any other groups, despite the poor attendance. Was this reviewed during the consultation period or just left to run. Was it considered sufficient people have had the opportunity to respond?

15. The committee raised the pivotal time of transition from childhood to adulthood, the move to different services, and the importance of liaising with Further Education.

There is very little further education provision generally let alone for people with disabilities or people with autism. How is Southwark going to address this?

16. Members asked if there had been liaison with school SENCO leads as a correct and timely diagnosis is very important, and the Assistant Director agreed that it is important to diagnose early to prevent latter problems and avoid a misdiagnosis for a behaviour problem.

More information on SENCO communication & engagement is requested.

17. A member commented that the strategy is a little thin on schools and also that she could not see a document that meets the needs of professionals. She asked the Assistant Director if officers will be sending out a questionnaire to professionals. He responded that he did not know if there was a survey for professionals, but there is a dedicated session for professionals to feed into the strategy.

How many professionals and in what capacity attended the consultation or put in online comments?

18. The chair suggested using the services of the Headteachers’ Executive to promote the consultation to schools.

*Was any attempt made to contact the head teachers' executive during the consultation period?
What responses were received from head teachers?*

19. Members stressed the importance of 'Independent Living', and people with autism being able to access adequate support to live in the community

Very little mention is made of independent living, crucially how training can be achieved and there is no mention of any services targeted at independent living strategies e.g. Key ring, Dimensions, etc Shared lives scheme is mentioned as is the Learning disability Accommodation Strategy but there is no detail as to how this will impact or be implemented

20. The strategy focused almost exclusively on data and training frontline staff and much of this training was online.

Training cannot just be a module on the online portal; this will give very little insight into the needs of the vast range of autistic people.

21. The document is fairly dry and consultation questions lack an open question.
22. A member asked if there will be section on monitoring the implementation of the strategy, and a section on how it will be kept updated. The Assistant Director referred to Statement of Intent, and the committee followed up by emphasising the important of measurable targets & outcomes and a continual cycle of refreshment of the strategy aims and content.
23. There was a comment that that autism is not a mental illness, not a disability, just different. People are not going to get better or worse - but are at risk of becoming isolated, and the strategy would benefit from taking that stance.
24. Members queried if there was sufficient engagement with parents.

Kath raised this with author on consultation and it was agreed this was to be included

25. Only 6 autistic people without Learning Difficulties are receiving any services. This is a shocking statistic.
26. Only 15% with autism in employment compared to 49% of the total of people with a disability.

Attention must be paid to the needs of autistic people for help transitioning from school into an assisted traineeship, an apprenticeship or a job. Use of SEEDS and Southwark Works is key. Many autistic people are unable to work full time; they require long term planning, support when they do anything new and time to get into a new routine. Employers, trainers and those working with the young person need to be made aware, so that appropriate time can be allocated for familiarisation with their new role.

The committee is submitting this as part of the Autism Strategy consultation process and requests feedback at the 16th December scrutiny committee meeting.