

The Greater Manchester Autism Consortium

Website Update- August 2006

Introduction

Welcome to the annual Autism GM website update about developments within the Greater Manchester Consortium. It has been another busy year within the region.

The launch of PARIS (Public Autism Resource Information Service) by the National Autistic Society in 22nd February 2005 means that up-to-date local resources can now be identified by going onto the NAS website and putting in your post code. The address for this is www.info.autism.org.uk

Key Developments

The following is a summary for developments that have taken place within the ten authorities of the consortium in the past 12 months. The information has been provided by members of each of the development groups in the area and may not be exhaustive.

1. Autism Services Development Groups

The Multi-agency Autism Services Development Groups are regularly meeting in **Bolton, Manchester, Rochdale and Salford** where there are separate groups to discuss adults and children with ASD. **Bury, Oldham, Stockport and Wigan** also meet regularly and have groups that discuss both children and adults with ASD. Tameside and Trafford groups have not met for sometime.

2. Identification, Assessment and Diagnosis

In **Manchester** Social Communication Assessment and Intervention Teams are developing and Pre-School Special Needs staff have now joined each of the three SCAIT's. In adult services there is work underway to clarify the diagnostic and care pathway for adults with ASD who do not have a learning disability.

Oldham has been working on the pre-school and school age diagnostic pathway in the past year.

On the Vulnerable Adult Team there is a Clinical Psychologist in post who is working half-time for people with Asperger's Syndrome and half-time with other vulnerable young people. This post-holder is also involved in assessment and diagnosis within a multi-disciplinary team.

Tameside now has a diagnostic care pathway for pre-school and school-age children up and running.

Work is underway in **Bolton, Salford and Trafford** to try and identify a joint diagnosis and assessment service to adults with ASD who do not have a learning disability.

Work is on-going on trying to restart the ASD assessment classroom in **Salford**. The Child Development Unit in **Salford** has a multi-agency panel for all children with disabilities where professionals and parents can discuss concerns flagged up and to identify further work.

3. Early Intervention

Bolton still offering Early Bird programmes to recently diagnosed parents.

Bury continue to run parent workshops to follow up diagnosis and also run Hannon More than Words once a year.

Oldham are now running parent workshops for families of newly diagnosed children with ASD.

Rochdale are running workshops for parents of recently diagnosed children with ASD.

Wigan has purchased 5 places on 3 full *help!* Programmes to be run over the next three years within the Borough. Early Bird also continues to be offered to Parents of Pre-School children.

Salford has focussed a great deal of training on ASD in the Early Years settings. **Manchester** is also focussing on intensive ASD training in children's centres and it is hoped that this will improve early intervention outcomes for pre-school children with ASD.

A family from **Stockport** have started a charity called the Joshua Short Foundation and hope to provide workshops and support for pre-school children in Stockport in partnership with the Family Services Development Project and a local professional, Catherine Aldred.

There is now a full-time North West NAS *help!* Project Officer post established in the Manchester Office. The post is held as a job-share, by Suzie Franklin and Dave Scowcroft. Details of where programmes are running are available on the NAS website on www.nas.org.uk There was a one day *help!* programme in North Manchester in March, thanks to the generous donation of the Connaught Association in Manchester

4. Education

Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford and Tameside all have successful and well-established ASD Advisory Services to support mainstream schools supporting children and young people with ASD.

Manchester has started an Outreach Service from Grange School. The SEN Strategy Review is still ongoing but there are plans for more funded training on ASD to be made available too.

In **Oldham**, the secondary ASD Resource Site opened in September 2005.

As stated earlier **Salford** has been investing a great deal in training in the Early Years settings

Stockport are running a three year ASD project as a multi-agency project between Education, Health and Social Services. The project will focus on person-centred plans around communication and behaviour strategies involving school and home settings.

Bolton now has ASD specific classes in a number of the special schools as well as a resourced provision within a mainstream high school.

BGWS were renamed Together Trust in October 2005. They now have a 16-19 service in Manchester called the Russell Centre.

5. Leisure and Short Breaks

In **Bolton**, a group called Bolton Kids2gether are running numerous activities for children and young people with ASD. This includes a youth group run jointly with ASGMA/Aspirations

Bury's Befriending project has been going from strength to strength. They also run a social group for young people with ASD in partnership with ASGMA/Aspirations.

Manchester are in the process of developing a new Family Placement Short Break Scheme and are recruiting and training 2/3 families to work with children with a number of complex needs, including autism.

Oldham's Social Group for young people with ASD now meets once a week. During the summer of 2006 there have also been playschemes run within Borough. The Befriending Co-ordinator role has now widened to a development role for more inclusion in leisure.

Rochdale and **Tameside** now have monthly social groups run jointly by the authorities and by ASGMA/Aspirations.

In **Stockport** the Trampolining Group for children with ASD is now run by "Copely Trampolining Club" and is still very popular.

The NAS Befriending Scheme in **Trafford and Manchester** is still going but demand is always very high and there are waiting lists

Membership of ASGMA/Aspirations continues to grow showing how much demand there is for leisure support for people with Asperger's Syndrome.

Leisure for Autism has had five playschemes this year covering three weeks of the summer holidays. Demand continues to outstrip places every year.

Yet again various parent support groups, including Oldham OSCA and Bolton BAAG, have been running their own summer activities to fill the gap for leisure and support.

The project receives requests for information about summer holiday schemes and services from around January onwards every year. Judging by the calls the project receives it is the cause of great stress to parents.

Most of the Autism Services Development groups have recognised leisure and short breaks as a priority and are working on this at the moment. The consortium as a whole have agreed to work on a collective short-term break strategy including the joint commissioning of a specialist short-break service across authorities and the development of more low-level preventative services that do not have to rely on eligibility for Social Services.

6. Transition

Bury has been running a pilot project to allocate Key Workers at transition from Connexions. This project has been very successful and has included young people with disabilities including ASD's.

Salford has decided to prioritise person-centred planning for young people with ASD at transition.

Bolton now has a team for Young People with Disabilities to ensure smoother transitions between the ages of 16-25. The team is for people with complex needs.

The Project has produced a document called AS Inform Greater Manchester, based on a document originally written by Andrew Powell of the NAS for the Bath and Avon area. This is available on the Consortium website www.autismgm.org.uk

7. Employment Support

Demand for the services of the NAS Prospects worker continues to grow. Prospects also now offer training and Norman Darwen, the Manchester Prospects worker, has been given a contract with Manchester University to offer once a week student support for students with Asperger's Syndrome.

8. Housing Options

Bury is working with the NAS to establish a service within Bury.

Oldham's Supported Living Scheme has received NAS Accreditation. The Vulnerable Adult Team have also been working closely with the local Housing Service to improve options for those they support.

The NAS Services have found that demand for Outreach Services has increased greatly in the past 2 years. With this service people can live in their own flats or houses and get targeted support when they need it.

Demand for Direct Payments continues to increase, especially to support independent living. Some authorities are considering keeping lists of potential Direct Payment workers who have experience in ASD to make recruitment easier.

A paper was prepared by the Family Services Development Project, earlier in 2006, to identify models of good practice for housing for those with High Functioning Autism and Asperger's Syndrome.

9. Parent Support groups and the Parent Resource Network

Bury's group are still meeting but are currently reviewing whether the group will carry on in its current format.

Bolton's group still meets regularly and also runs monthly Saturday groups and trips in the summer.

The **Manchester** group that meet in the Winnicott Centre are still going and there are proposals that another group may also be starting in Manchester.

Oldham's groups OSCA and ASPACE (Asperger's support for parents and carers) have also gone from strength to strength. OSCA celebrated their 10 year anniversary earlier in 2006 and now have a new committee as previous committee members had carried the role for over 10 years.

Rochdale has plans to start a parent support group for parents of children who have recently received a diagnosis.

Dr, Latha Hackett and Mari Saeki have been working on developing a South Asian Parent Support group and a Somali Parent Support group in central Manchester.

In **Stockport**, Living with Autism are now meeting monthly and also have an extra drop-in session in the fortnight in between (un-staffed) for use of the library. The group is open to anyone willing to travel from any other area.

Tameside have restarted TASCAs, and this is currently being run by a trainee Clinical Psychologist. There is also still a group which meets at CAMHS for parents of children with Asperger's Syndrome.

Trafford's parent support group has also grown and now includes parents of children in Special Schools as well as in mainstream.

In **Wigan** there is a parent support group called Spectrum and there have also been more formal parent workshops regularly at Landgate School.

The Asperger parent support group that meet in ASGMA's offices has grown from strength to strength and now meet monthly, alternating the meetings daytime and evening to suit different parents needs. ASGMA also have plans to start a group for parents of classically autistic children.

The Greater Manchester Parent Resource Network has had a number of changes in the past year but is still going strong.

10. NAS Accreditation

Oldham achieved accreditation for the Supported Living Network last year and also gained accreditation for two of the Day Services so far and are going for accreditation of a further two later this year.

Bolton and **Salford** are also going forward with plans to gain accreditation for Day Services.

11. Training

The Greater Manchester Autism Awareness-Raising slides are still being used and some additional slides were also developed recently. The Regional Training Strategy Group are still meeting and they plan to develop training for siblings and peers of people with ASD.

A number of authorities have been prioritising training including **Oldham, Salford, Stockport and Trafford**.

General and Regional Development

1. The NAS Development Team for the North

There have been a number of changes in the team during 2006. The biggest change was the retirement of Brenda Nally, the Regional Coordinator, in June 2006. Brenda started off as the Family Services Development Project Officer in 1993 and became the Regional Co-ordinator for the North in 2002. Francine Brower has now taken on the role of Regional Coordinator.

The North West *help!* Post is also based in the Manchester Office.

There have been a number of other people leaving the team including Wendy Naylor who was the projects Information Officer and Suzie Franklin who left as the Regional Administrator but returned as the *help!* Project Officer!

The Regional Team were instrumental in co-ordinating the work of the **Autism Commissioning Standards** document alongside the Partner's in Autism Group, several commissioners from the North West and North West Training and Development Team. The document is available on the NAS website and the NWTDT website.

Clare Hughes from the Regional team also undertook a review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Autism Task Group Report produced in 2003. This report is also available for distribution and has led to the formation of the Network for chairs of Autism Services Development Groups to ensure that Chairs of ASDG's can meet for support and to share ideas and good practice.

The Greater Manchester Autism Consortium has contributed to the formation of a similar consortium called the North East Network in the Newcastle area. This is a collaboration of 12 local authorities with the support of the Strategic Health Authority.

2. Conventions and Conferences

There was another very successful Consortium Convention in April 2006. The theme this year was Person Centred Approaches in working with people with Autism.

In November 2005 there was a one day conference organised by the project on Autism and Behaviour. The speaker was Phillip Whittaker, author of "Challenging Behaviour and Autism". The event was financed by the generous donation made by Caroline Bond, a Clinical Psychologist in Manchester, who raised the funds by running the London Marathon for the project.

There were two NAS Conferences in the area during 2005/2006. One was the BME and Autism Conference and the other the conference was on Advocacy and Autism.

A group called ASPECT, made up of a number of people with Asperger's syndrome, a parent of a person with Asperger's Syndrome and some professionals, organised a conference in Manchester for adults with Asperger's syndrome. As far as we are aware this is the first conference organised by and for people with Asperger's syndrome in the UK. All the speakers had Asperger's syndrome and the day was also chaired by a person with Asperger's syndrome. Details can be found on www.aspectaction.org

The NAS *help!* Team now also has 2 workers funded by the Big Lottery, to run parent workshops called help!2. The idea of these workshops is go into more detail on specific issues such as using visual supports, anger management, supporting siblings and bullying. There will be two held in Trafford in September 2006.

4. Autism GM Newsletter

The newsletter has continued to be produced usually once a term. Contributions for articles are always appreciated. The Information Officer role is currently vacant and the post will be advertised in early September 2006.

All of the newsletters are posted on the AutismGM website www.autismgm.org.uk

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August 2006