
AUTISM SELF ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK 2015/16

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this paper is to inform Adults and Housing Scrutiny of the outcome of the Darlington Autism Self-Assessment as reported to the Public Health Observatory in October 2016.

Summary

2. For the past four years each local authority area has been asked to complete an Autism self-assessment. The Assessment is an attempt to gauge local progress in implementing the Autism Act 2009 and the National Autism Strategy, "Think Autism". Although the Local Authority has the lead for its completion, the self-assessment updates progress from a range of statutory partners including the NHS.
3. The 2015/16 self-assessment comprised of 52 key questions. Of these there were 32 RAG rated questions, and from a DBC perspective, 8 were rated green, 1 amber/green, 18 amber and 5 red.
4. The self-assessment identified a number of areas that require some additional focus, including:
 - (a) The data in relation to adults with Autism remains inconsistent and without detailed data it is difficult to commission and plan for the future. This will be addressed somewhat through the application of Liquid Logic.
 - (b) There are some gaps in training, notably within Housing and the wider Criminal Justice System.
 - (c) There is scope for more reasonable adjustments in relation to Autism to ensure access to universal services.
 - (d) The voice of people with Autism and their supporters is often not heard.
5. A local delivery plan will be developed to address the gaps identified in the self-assessment, once DH feedback has been received.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Adults and Housing Scrutiny accepts the report and acknowledges the progress made to date and the improvement work which is still required.
 - (b) The draft Local Delivery Plan be endorsed by Adults & Housing Scrutiny Committee.
 - (c) Further reporting be made into Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, where specific actions are required of partner organisations.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) Progress will be measured in next year's annual self-assessment.
 - (b) There is a legal imperative to ensure that public bodies make reasonable adjustments to ensure that people with autism are able to access services and support.

Suzanne Joyner
Director of Children and Adults Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Mark Humble - x 5857

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no direct implications arising from this report. However the assessment considers the impacts of the system on people with autism and asks what reasonable adjustments the wider system needs to make to include people with autism.
Adults & Housing	This report is an assessment of how the Adults & Housing system supports people with autism.
Carbon Impact	There are no implications arising from this report
Diversity	There are no implications arising from this report.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	People with autism and their families
Budget and Policy Framework	No direct impact
Key Decision	Not a key decision
Urgent Decision	Not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report considers how people with autism and their families can be supported to be citizens.
Efficiency	No direct impact

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Following the Adult Autism Strategy 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' published in 2010, the subsequent update, Think Autism published in April 2014 and the revised statutory guidance for health and social care published in March 2015, the Department of Health has placed a responsibility on local authorities, health and other key partners to work together to deliver the main objectives of the strategy. There is an annual self-assessment which has now been running for four years which is designed to monitor progress.
9. The self-assessment contains seven broad themes:
 - (a) Planning
 - (b) Training
 - (c) Diagnosis
 - (d) Care and Support
 - (e) Accommodation
 - (f) Employment
 - (g) The Criminal Justice System
10. The assessment comprises 52 key questions. This includes 32 RAG rated questions, asking partners to rate themselves as red (not meeting requirements), amber (room for improvement) or green (meeting requirements). Some of the questions simply ask for a yes/no answer and some ask for figures or narrative. People with Autism, their families and supporters were involved in the completion of the self-assessment. Of the 32 RAG rated questions, Darlington rated 8 green, 1 amber/green, 18 amber and 5 red.
11. A copy of the self-assessment is attached as **Appendix 1**. A summary of some of the findings are presented below.
12. Planning:
 - (a) Darlington rated **Green** in relation to the inclusion of people with Autism in the Strategic Needs Assessment. In the recent refresh it is recognised that some work is still required to ensure that the needs of people with Autism and their carers are identified. However the needs of people with Autism are identified in the existing and draft refresh of the Market Position Statement.
 - (b) Darlington rated **Red** in the planning around reasonable adjustments as, although the council have robust policies and procedures and a long history of making reasonable adjustments, the Council equality policies do not specifically mention Autism.
13. Training:

- (a) There is evidence of an increase in the number of staff within social care trained to work with people with Autism, with some in depth training for frontline staff, notably those undertaking assessments, having been undertaken.
- (b) The Council rated **Green** in relation to the specific training provided to staff to carry out statutory assessments.
- (c) There is evidence that some partners are also providing training to their staff, notably health, the police and probation. Contact has been made with the local Courts to support their work through raising awareness of Autism. Courts staff are currently supported through Liaison and Diversion officers.

14. Diagnosis

- (a) There is a well- established and published pathway for diagnosis for both people with a learning disability and people with Asperger's syndrome.
- (b) The existing Crisis Team is able to support people with Autism.
- (c) Darlington CCG rated **Red** in terms of its ability to undertake a diagnostic assessment within 3 months of referral, in line with NICE guidelines.
- (d) Darlington CCG rated **Green** in their ability to offer a number of reasonably adjusted assessment services, psychology, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy for people with a learning disability and Autism.
- (e) Darlington CCG rated **Red** in their ability to offer a number of reasonably adjusted assessment services, psychology, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy for people with Autism.

15. Care and Support

- (a) Darlington rated **Green** in terms of the availability of trained advocates to support people through a number of social care processes.
- (b) Darlington rated **Green** in terms of offering carers of people with Autism a carers assessment.

16. Housing

There is no policy in place ensuring that at least one staff member in housing is trained to support someone with Autism to make a housing application. Work is underway with housing staff to offer training to address this issue.

17. Employment

Darlington rated **Amber** in relation to having in place a transition process to adult services that has an employment focus.

18. In the section on the Criminal Justice System

- (a) Darlington rated **Amber** in relation to the level of engagement with key partners in planning for people with Autism.
- (b) Darlington rated **Amber** in relation to a trained appropriate adult service supporting people in places of safety and custody suites.

Local Progress

- 19. The Darlington Learning Impairment Network is the local vehicle for supporting the development of the local Autism Action Plan.
- 20. There is a task and finish group that has been established that currently includes some statutory services, specialist providers and the third sector. This group is looking to draft an initial action plan to improve local services and support to people with Autism before seeking wider agreement.
- 21. Work is underway to develop a plan for Darlington to be an Autism friendly town.

Local Position

- 22. There is evidence of clear progress within Darlington over the duration of the 4 self-assessments, particularly in relation to:
 - (a) Clear pathways in relation to Diagnosis and Care and Support service provision.
 - (b) Many more staff being trained to understand the impact of Autism.
 - (c) A greater understanding of some of the reasonable adjustments that need to be made to ensure that people with Autism are able to access mainstream services. The local police station now has the capacity to dim cell lights if required.
- 23. Gaps which remain include:
 - (a) The availability of accurate data in relation to adults with Autism. Without this data it is difficult to commission and plan for future support provision. This will be addressed through the application of the new Liquid Logic system across Adult Social Care.
 - (b) There remains some gaps in staff training, particular in relation to non-social care services, e.g. Housing and the wider Criminal Justice System.
 - (c) Further improvements could be made to support reasonable adjustments for people with Autism to ensure to ensure they can access mainstream services.
 - (d) Ensuring the voice of people with Autism and their carers are heard.