

Report

Report to:	Social Work Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 August 2019
Report by:	Director, Health and Social Care

Subject:	The South Lanarkshire Local Autism Action Plan - Annual Update/Progress Report
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise Committee of current progress of the Autism Resources Coordination Hub
- ◆ advise the Committee on the development of the South Lanarkshire Local Autism Action Plan

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the progress made in raising the profile of autism within South Lanarkshire Council, as detailed in the report be noted; and
- (2) that the progress achieved in the implementation of the revised and updated Local Autism Action Plan be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. On 20 June 2018, the Social Work Resources Committee approved funding for the continued development of the Autism Resources Coordination Hub (ARCH) and implementation of the Local Autism Action Plan, 2018 to 2023. An undertaking was made to report back to the Committee regarding the progress made in the first year of the Action Plan's implementation.
- 3.2. For the sake of clarity and comparison, the present briefing will adopt a structure which will track the strategic themes and operational priorities outlined in the Local Autism Action Plan report, and contrast this information with developments and progress made in relation to these objectives.
- 3.3. The model of service delivery adopted in ARCH is the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach which seeks to engage and mobilise the capacities of all autism partners in the Private, Statutory, Voluntary and Parent Led Sectors within South Lanarkshire. This model focuses, in particular, upon 'what's strong' instead of 'what's wrong' within our autism community.
- 3.4. The current establishment of staff within ARCH incorporates a full-time Coordinator, two full-time Family Support Workers, and a part-time Administration Officer.

- 3.5. ARCH remains active in facilitating the development of services within the community, many of which are funded and delivered by the community itself alongside stakeholders/partners in the statutory, private and third sectors. Parent Carer Support Groups are arranged and delivered collaboratively between parent carer volunteers. The ARCH Autism Carers constituted user group and ARCH staff deliver guidance, signposting and support to parent carers and autistic people themselves. The Lanarkshire Carers Centre has also been commissioned to provide a staff member to co-work/facilitate one of the Parent Carer Support Groups held in the Centre every Monday morning.
- 3.6. A range of autism stakeholders remain actively involved in collaborating on designing and delivering supports based within ARCH. This has resulted in the centre receiving approximately 6,000 visitors/users in 2018 and 900 phone calls being received in the same period. This has reduced demand on other services from the autism community.

4. Further Developments of the ARCH Service: 2018-2019

- 4.1. Local Autism Action Plan Theme One – *‘Better and more consistent diagnostic processes and pathways with the provision of post-diagnostic supports for autistic people and their families throughout their lifespan in South Lanarkshire’*
- 4.2. In 2018 NHS Lanarkshire established a pan-Lanarkshire Neurodevelopmental Pathways’ work stream which has resulted in approval for the establishment of two bespoke children and young people’s autism diagnostic teams located in two North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire facilities. This will, for the first time, bring all autism diagnostic clinicians into a single facility located within the two local authority areas serviced by NHS Lanarkshire. It is envisaged that these two diagnostic services will be in situ by the end of 2019 in both authorities, as progress is already underway at the North Lanarkshire facility located in the Newmains area, and a similar facility is currently being identified within South Lanarkshire. This will ensure that South Lanarkshire residents will have a resource within their own community and not have to travel to North Lanarkshire as was previously the expectation.
- 4.3. It is clear that the waiting times for diagnosis will be improved with the creation of a bespoke autism diagnostic facility within South Lanarkshire. NHS Lanarkshire currently reports to the Scottish Government on these measures which currently comply within nationally set service standard timescales. However, the new facility will improve on these measures.
- 4.4. ARCH continues to be actively involved in advocating for the establishment of an adult autism diagnostic pathway. At present, diagnostic pathways do exist within NHS Lanarkshire for autistic adults who have a co-morbid learning disability, or are already involved with adult mental health services. A limited, discretionary budget presently exists for those who may be thought to be autistic and do not have such co-morbid conditions. This budget is limited to individual cases, and only considered with the written support of the individuals’ GP. If a case is made and the budget successfully awarded, the present system relies on diagnostic services commissioned from a Third Sector organisation located in Alloa on a case by case basis.

4.5. The Scottish Minister for Mental Health has stated the Government's wish to see the establishment of adult autism diagnostic pathways for all adults, whether they have a learning disability/mental health condition or not. Such services have already been successfully established in other Health Board areas in Scotland including Lothian and Highland.

4.6. An outstanding objective is the development, design and delivery of a greater number and variety of effective post diagnostic support services delivered by the statutory, third sector, private and peer-led sectors in South Lanarkshire. This is a local and national issue which remains the focus of discussions between ARCH and development officers in Autism Network Scotland (AN(S)). The AN(S) 'Menu of interventions' is currently under review at a national level to address this matter.

5. Local Autism Action Plan Theme Two – *'Improved life opportunities through supported employment, training and education placements in South Lanarkshire'*

5.1. ARCH hosts an innovative employability work stream which has for the first time brought together a range of autism partners from the following services to consider autism-specific employability issues facing our autism community: UNITE Trade Union, UNISON Trade Union, Skills Development Scotland, the South Lanarkshire Employment Support Service, Fair Start (Remploy) Scotland, Jobcentre Plus, South Lanarkshire College and New College Lanarkshire. The intention is to collaborate in developing autism-informed services and supports to enable South Lanarkshire's autistic people gain access to the workplace, training opportunities or further/continuing educational placements, then being supported to sustain positive destinations once they've been obtained.

5.2. South Lanarkshire's Employment Support Service has initiated an innovative mentoring project connecting autistic adults, who have had positive experiences navigating their own transition to the workplace, and are then willing to act in a 'champion' role to support and assist younger autistic people locate and sustain suitable employment, training or education placements. This is an autism-informed venture which has been initiated by a South Lanarkshire autistic employee, and is an excellent example of the self-initiated 'cultural shift' ARCH is attempting to nurture in progressing the Local Autism Action Plan strategic priorities.

6. Local Autism Action Plan Theme Three – *'Clear, relevant and accessible information and autism awareness for the wider community and generic workforces throughout South Lanarkshire'*

6.1. ARCH has remained at the forefront of producing and distributing autism-related public information at a local, national and international level. This has been achieved, amongst other developments, by regular, usually fortnightly or more often, email distributions to the ARCH mailing list, as well as the autonomous ARCH Autism Carers Facebook social media page which has 1000(+) members. The social media page has allowed support to be accessed at any time by autistic people and their parent carers from the autism community itself, whilst lowering demand and dependency upon statutory services.

6.2. ARCH has initiated regular monthly basic autism awareness sessions facilitated by an autistic adult, an independent autism consultant and the ARCH Coordinator. These sessions started in September 2018 and have since then been consistently over-subscribed. The sessions embody the asset-based approach, ensuring that all sectors and stakeholders within the South Lanarkshire autism community come

together to benefit from a mutual learning experience and share their lived experiences with one another, as well as raise their autism awareness. The session has also resulted in professionals and parent carers gaining autism-informed approaches for the first time.

6.3. ARCH has successfully nominated over 150 parent carers and professionals on to the SVQ Level 2 and Level 3 'Understanding Autism' programme offered by The West of Scotland College in Paisley. The ripple effect of this fully-funded training programme is the creation of an ever-growing cohort of autism-informed stakeholders who are and will continue to be in a position to cascade greater autism informed practice and expertise throughout all sectors. This process has also created greater capacity for the autism community to represent its own needs in an increasingly self-directed way, moving away from historical dependency-inducing models of service delivery. Learning Curve, the programme's Ofsted approved education and skills agency, has confirmed that this is the only autism education programme to have been taken up in such numbers within one Scottish local authority area.

6.4. ARCH continues to work with all Resources within the Authority to ensure that the strategic overview contained within the Local Autism Action Plan is incorporated into policies and procedures when they are being updated. An example of this was the incorporation of the Action Plan principles into the revised Council Homeless Policy updated in 2018. ARCH has also continued to advocate for all public policies and strategies be translated into printable versions, for example the Framework for the Education of Pupils who have Autism Spectrum Disorder.

7. Local Autism Action Plan Theme Four – *'Better support during key life transitions including; moving from pre-school to primary, primary to secondary, secondary on to adult services, employment, education or training, independent living and rehabilitation into the community from residential settings'*

7.1. A separate work stream has been established by the Autism Strategy Steering Group, and chaired by a Social Work Service Manager and co-chaired by the Education Inclusion Services Manager within the Council.

7.2. The ARCH Autism Carers group is currently applying to be given charity status by Volunteer Scotland, with a view to establishing a network of autism-informed and appropriately trained peer advocates who will be in a position to accompany autistic people and parent carers to formal meetings, principally future planning meetings, enhanced transition meetings, or transitions from residential settings into the community.

7.3. The Govan Law Centre has been commissioned to undertake specific advocacy training with seven parent carers, all of whom have gained SVQ Levels 2 and 3 in 'Understanding Autism', and who have volunteered to be in the first cohort of peer advocates. Feedback from several meetings where these peer advocates have been in attendance has been positive from both professionals and users and carers alike.

7.4. The 'Principles of Good Transition Three – Autism Supplement 2017' has now been embedded within the joint Education Resources/Social Work Resources transition strategy.

- 7.5. ARCH has been actively engaged with the Community Justice Partnership in ensuring that autistic young people and adults in the Youth and Criminal Justice Systems are having their neurodiversity issues recognised and supported within these systems.
- 7.6. ARCH continues to deliver talks to Locality Based Justice Services teams in heightening autism informed practice. Several Justice Services workers have already participated in the Basic Autism Awareness sessions held monthly in ARCH.
- 7.7. ARCH has facilitated a joint meeting between AN(S), NHS Lanarkshire's Adult Learning Disability Team, and Adult Social Work staff to scope the needs of older autistic people and the development of autism-informed supports within existing services including Community Lifestyles, Older People's Residential Units and Community Day Services.
8. **Local Autism Action Plan Theme Five** – *'Improved professional awareness and training throughout South Lanarkshire as well as joined up working approaches'*
 - 8.1. ARCH continues to host monthly basic autism awareness sessions for all autism stakeholders, including parent carers and professionals in the Statutory, Third and Private sectors. Since being started in September 2018, these sessions have been consistently over-subscribed, and feedback forms have indicated the benefits of bringing together stakeholders throughout the community, alongside those with a lived experience of autism.
 - 8.2. ARCH has been instrumental in having a growing cohort of autism-informed individuals nominated for, and successfully completing, the SVQ Levels 2 and 3 in 'Understanding Autism' course run by the West of Scotland College in Paisley. This has resulted in autism informed practitioners being located throughout the South Lanarkshire community and within key services where they can advise and support users, carers and staff in promoting autism-informed practices.
 - 8.3. ARCH continues to collaborate with Education Inclusion colleagues, the Youth and Family Community Learning Service, Locality Social Work colleagues and our parent carers in continuing to offer the National Autistic Society's 'Early Bird' Programme. This has necessitated a significant re-investment of funds from Education Inclusion services, as well as a comprehensive training schedule being established within South Lanarkshire. This has, for the first time, meant that the National Autistic Society training team have successfully delivered training from South Lanarkshire resources as opposed to Barnsley, England where the training was previously delivered. This has represented a significant saving for the authority as practitioners no longer need to travel to Yorkshire for three to five days.
 - 8.4. ARCH has been instrumental in ensuring that a cohort of parent carers have been licensed Early Bird programme deliverers alongside professionals.
 - 8.5. The Early Bird programmes have been incorporated into the South Lanarkshire Parenting Support Pathway.
 - 8.6. ARCH was represented at the AN(S) event in 2018 when the Scottish Government Minister for Mental Health announced that all undergraduate teachers will now receive mandatory autism awareness training within every training programme throughout the country.

9. Other Relevant Developments

- 9.1. The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 2015 – ARCH convened a focus group in 2018 to consider the national proposals to reform the current legislation and subsequently lodged written submissions to the Independent Review Team. This was then used within focus groups convened by the Independent Review Team which was attended by ARCH parent carers. The Review has now reached Stage Two, and legislative reform is a likely outcome once the Final Stage Three process has been completed.
- 9.2. ARCH has also made written submissions and attended Scottish Government keynote seminars in relation to the Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Task Force. This Task Force, which was established in October 2018, has, as a result of submissions from both ARCH and the broader autism community, established a neurodiversity work stream to consider the specific needs of autistic children and young people who are experiencing co-existing mental health issues.
- 9.3. The ABCD model of service delivery has generated considerable interest within the broader autism community, a result of which has seen ARCH invited to make presentations at AN(S), and the Scottish Social Services Council expo in Edinburgh in 2018 and 2019.
- 9.4. ARCH received a Royal visit in March 2019 from HRH the Princess Royal – a former patron of The National Autistic Society, who expressed real interest in the innovative service delivery model represented by ARCH.
- 9.5. ARCH has received approximately 6,000 centre visits per annum since being formed in 2016. Over 900 phone calls were received annually within the same period, and the mailing list currently stands at 1220 autistic people, parent carers and professionals (approximately 80% autistic people/parent carers and 20% professionals).
- 9.6. ARCH Autism Carers have been nominated for a National Diversity award in 2019.
- 9.7. One of the ARCH centre users, who is an autistic adult and parent carer herself, has established an additional social media support page on the Facebook site. This is supporting an increasing number of autistic adults some of whom have never accessed services or supports before.

10. Future Developments

- 10.1. Peer Advocacy services are currently considered a priority for future autism supports within ARCH and the South Lanarkshire autism community. Funding applications have been made to Scottish Electric and the National Lottery, however, these have not, as yet, been successful although the ARCH parent carer group has continued to apply for additional funding from other potential funding streams.
- 10.2. Autism sibling support groups have already been established by COVEY, however further supports are being planned with the ARCH parent carers groups, and COVEY focussing on teenage siblings as this is presently a group who have no provision.
- 10.3. ARCH will continue to explore additional input within other South Lanarkshire localities. This will initially consider the Clydesdale locality due to rurality issues precluding many services users and carers from accessing ARCH provision.

- 10.4. ARCH will also continue to explore the use of assistive technology in addressing such issues particularly the aforementioned rurality challenges.
- 10.5. ARCH has made an approach to the LGBTQI community's 'PRIDE' event with a view to having autistic representation at this widely recognised celebration of gender and sexual diversity in Glasgow.
- 11. Employee Implications**
- 11.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.
- 12. Financial Implications**
- 12.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.
- 13. Other Implications**
- 13.1. There are no additional risk implications associated with this report.
- 13.2. There are no sustainable development issues associated with this report.
- 14. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**
- 14.1. There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment in terms of the proposals contained within this report.
- 14.2. There is also no requirement to undertake any consultation in terms of the information contained in this report.

Val de Souza
Director, Health and Social Care

11 May 2019

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ improve health care and well-being
- ◆ get it right for every child
- ◆ protect vulnerable children
- ◆ strengthen partnership working community leadership and engagement

Previous References

- ◆ Social Work Resources Committee – 20 June 2018
- ◆ Executive Committee - 8 March 2017

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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