

**Briefing paper on: the Autism Statutory Guidance,
Implementing fulfilling and rewarding lives
(Department of Health, December 2010)**



The Autism Act 2009 – the first disability specific piece of legislation – placed two key duties on the Government: to produce an adult autism strategy, *Fulfilling and rewarding lives* (DH, March 2010), and to produce statutory guidance for local authorities and local health bodies. The latter document, *Implementing fulfilling and rewarding lives*, was published on 17th December 2010. It had immediate statutory force from the day of publication; this means that Local authorities and NHS bodies must take account of the guidance and follow the relevant sections (DH, December 2010). The statutory guidance uses the umbrella term ‘autism’ to cover all individuals on the autism spectrum; which means the requirements of the statutory guidance also apply to adults with Aspergers syndrome. **Designed to help local authorities, NHS bodies and NHS Foundation Trusts to ‘develop services that support and meet the locally identified needs of people with autism and their families and carers’ (DH,2010: 5)** in the following areas:

A) Training of staff who provide services to adults with autism

- **General autism awareness training** - should be available for everyone working in health and social care – not just those in frontline service delivery
- **Specialised training for staff working in key roles** – such as GPs, those responsible for conducting community care assessments, and those in leadership roles locally.

B) Identification and diagnosis of autism in adults, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services

- **Each local authority area should put in place a clear pathway for diagnosis of autism**
- When an adult is diagnosed with autism, the healthcare professionals making the diagnosis should inform the adult diagnosed, and/or their carers, **that they have the right to request a community care assessment.**
- **The duty upon Local authorities to assess a person who may be in need of community care services applies to people with autism, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis of autism and irrespective of their IQ.**
- **Community care assessments should be carried out by trained practitioners; the assessment taking into account of the communication needs of adults with autism.**

C) Planning of the provision of services to people with autism as they move from being children to adults

- **Local authorities and NHS bodies should ensure that all professionals involved in transitions for young people with autism have received autism training; professionals should inform the individual they are working with to their right to a community care assessment as they reach adulthood**
- **Young people with autism who do not have a statement of SEN may instead have a Health Action Plan.**

D) Local planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for adults with autism

- **Each local authority should appoint a lead professional to develop diagnostic and assessment services for adults with autism in their area.**
- **All local authorities need to gather data on the number, age range and needs of adults with autism and take their views, and those of their families and carers, into account in order to develop and commission services for adults with autism.**

In April, the Department of Health produced an *Essential Quality Outcomes Framework for Local Self Assessment Framework* (DH, April 2011) to help local authorities and NHS bodies to implement the statutory guidance. Skills for Care have published *Autism skills and knowledge list, for workers in generic social care and health services* (2011) which is useful in adding detail to the general training requirements of Section A of the Statutory Guidance. Despite the difficult financial context in which local authorities and NHS bodies are currently operating, it is vital that momentum is not lost on this issue because, as the National Audit Office Report shows, there are long term economic benefits in improving services for adults with autism (2009).

**About Autism West Midlands**

Autism West Midlands is the leading provider of specialist autism services in the West Midlands. We are a charity supporting people across the autism spectrum and their families, through our residential homes, supported living provision, family support, criminal justice support, education, training, information helpline service and support into employment.

Briefing your Scrutiny Board

Autism West Midlands would like to come and talk to your Scrutiny Board, as we have done for other local authorities, so that we can enable the Board to understand the implications of the Statutory Guidance.