

PE1704/Z

Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and Renfrewshire Council
submission of 19 June 2019

- 1. That every person in Scotland going through an autism diagnostic procedure will be assessed within a calendar year and receive a statutory services assessment from a qualified social worker as an integral part of this process, within twelve months from the date of their initial referral.**

There is a clear clinical pathway for the diagnosis of autism for adults living in Renfrewshire. Within Renfrewshire Learning Disability Service, adults with a learning disability referred for an autism diagnosis will be assessed within 6 months of receipt of referral by 2 clinicians from our multi-disciplinary team in line with current clinical guidance.

Adults who do not have a learning disability are referred to the Adult Autism Team based in East Renfrewshire HSCP (host HSCP for Learning Disability Services across NHSGGC).

Children who are diagnosed with autism can access an assessment from the Children with Disabilities Team. The team would aim to have all initial assessments concluded within three months of referral.

Having a diagnosis of autism does not necessarily equate to needing or wanting statutory services. For some people going through the diagnostic process a positive outcome is achieved by gaining a clearer understanding of how autism impacts on their life and wellbeing and by gaining some useful coping strategies. Locally, our Autism Connections Team offers flexible support, training and advice to people with autism and to mainstream and statutory and services, including signposting individuals to supports and services appropriate to their needs.

Individuals with community care needs are assessed for statutory services in line with our legislative duties and eligibility criteria, with a focus on risk management and complexity of need. A multi-disciplinary approach is taken to the allocation of work maximising the resources available. Referrals are initially screened to ensure they are allocated to an appropriate worker with the right skill set to respond to the level of complexity of the referral. We do not view it to be best practice to allocate low risk non-complex cases to qualified social workers when trained staff at lower grades can achieve a similar outcome. Autism training forms part of the continuous personal development for all staff.

Children referred for support from children's social work would normally have their needs assessed by a qualified social worker. There will be occasions

where another professional is considered to be more appropriate to undertake the assessment.

2. That children with autism in mainstream schools will have their assessed needs for classroom support met by an ASL assistant with a recognised autism qualification as part of a mandatory registration process for ASL professionals

Children with additional support needs in Renfrewshire are supported via the extended support framework. This framework ensures that a multi-disciplinary assessment is undertaken with the most appropriate professional identified to lead the assessment. Renfrewshire Children's Services doesn't agree that there is a need for the lead assessor to have a recognised autism qualification. The assessment of the child includes all of their needs and is holistic in nature.

3. That young adults with autism will have a statutory right to specialist support from their local authority up to the age of 25

Good transitional planning should take account of any specialist support a young person requires regardless of whether they have a diagnosis of autism or not. Many young adults with autism live fulfilled lives without the need for specialist supports. A change to the eligibility criteria to capture all young people with autism up to the age of 25, regardless of assessed needs, will have significant resource implications and will be difficult to achieve without further investment in the service

It is recognised that for some young people with autism the transition from school to further education or employment can be a difficult and without the right supports and strategies in place may lead to a breakdown of their placement. Strengthening engagement & training with universities, colleges and local businesses may achieve longer lasting positive outcomes for people with autism.

Locally our Autism Connections service is exploring developing support groups for young people with autism.

4. That an Autism Act will be in place within the next 5 years to enshrine specific rights and services for autistic people in our legal system.

There is currently a comprehensive set of legislative frameworks in place that protects the needs and rights of people with autism including ASP, Mental Health, Additional Support for Learning and the Equalities Act. Introducing a specific Act for people with autism may be viewed as discriminatory against other people with support needs.

The Scottish Strategy for Autism comes to an end in 2021. It may be beneficial for the Scottish Government to fully evaluate the impact of the strategy

recommendations has had on achieving positive outcomes for people with autism prior to agreeing to introduce an Autism Act.