

FALKIRK COUNCIL

SUBJECT: AUTISM STRATEGY
MEETING: EXECUTIVE
DATE: 19 NOVEMBER 2013
AUTHOR: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES
ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the Scottish Strategy for Autism and seek approval for the Falkirk Autism Strategy which will take forward the recommendations of the national document, at local level.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In autumn 2012, the Scottish Government published the Scottish Strategy for Autism. The document is designed to highlight the needs of those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and assist local authorities, health boards and the third sector to better work together to improve the identification, support and experience of all those affected by ASD including families and carers.
- 2.2 Prior to the publication of the Strategy, increasing attention was being focused nationally on this area. Across the country the incidence of diagnosis of ASD has been increasing. The reasons for this are complex and include increased awareness and understanding of the condition and improved diagnostic pathways.
- 2.3 In 2011, Falkirk Council Adult and Children's Services along with partners from NHS Forth Valley and the third sector began a review of our existing Autism Strategy, with a view to updating this and ultimately re-designing services to better meet the needs of those affected by ASD throughout their lives. The Public Social Partnership Approach was used for this work, and it was led initially by the Change Manager who was employed by CVS Falkirk until he left the Council.
- 2.4 The above review has therefore involved social work staff from both Adult and Children's Services, Education staff, Allied Health Professionals working with Children and Adult Psychiatric Services, and the voluntary sector as well as those affected by ASD.
- 2.5 Following the publication of the Scottish Strategy for Autism, it was agreed that the review group would develop a Falkirk response and that the work undertaken would form the basis for our local strategy. The Scottish Government have requested that local strategies and action plans are submitted by the end of November 2013.

3. THE SCOTTISH STRATEGY FOR AUTISM

- 3.1 The Scottish Strategy for Autism states that autism is a national priority. The Strategy is the result of extensive consultation at national level on the way to ensure that progress is made across Scotland in delivering quality services for those affected by ASD. The Strategy outlines national and local actions which are required, and underlines the whole life journey, and therefore the importance of a joined up approach to service development and delivery.
- 3.2 The Scottish Strategy outlines the Government's vision that 'individuals on the autistic spectrum are respected, accepted, and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives.'
- 3.3 The Strategy has a number of goals which are divided into Foundation Goals, to be attained within two years, Whole Life Journey goals to be attained within five years, and a Holistic Personalised approach to be attained within 10 years. In developing the Falkirk Strategy, those same timescales and division of goals have been adopted.
- 3.4 The Strategy also identifies indicators of best practice and these align closely to the information obtained within Falkirk from our consultation events. This included
- Involving those affected by ASD in developing services.
 - The need for Training and Development to enhance understanding of ASD.
 - Easily accessible information.
 - A multi-agency care pathway for assessment, diagnosis and intervention to improve support and remove barriers for those affected by ASD.
- 3.5 The Strategy contains 26 recommendations, many of which require action at national level and others more locally. Central to the recommendations is the need for all agencies and professionals to work together to better meet the whole life journey needs of those affected by ASD.

4. FALKIRK REPOSE

- 4.1 As indicated, Falkirk Council and partners were already working on developing our autism work prior to the publication of the Scottish Strategy. Using the PSP approach several consultation exercises have taken place over the past 18 months, to gain the views of families, professionals and the third sector on existing services - what works well, identification of gaps and what could be improved.
- 4.2 The outcome from this, is wide agreement on what works well:-
- A co-ordinated approach with a single 'key worker/named person'.
 - Flexible services which address the behaviour.
 - Diagnosis, information and support process regardless of the age of the individual.
 - Clearer and more easily accessible information available throughout life.
- Of particular concern for families and young adults was the difficulty in accessing services where a diagnosis had not been obtained, transitions stages, and lack of employment opportunities.

- 4.3 The Falkirk Autism Strategy is attached at Appendix 1. In consulting on how we take forward services in this area, a commitment was given to continue to use the Public Social Partnership approach which at its heart requires the inclusion of all stakeholders including families and service users. Our Strategy indicates that the goals and any ultimate redesign of services will be taken forward by professionals working with people with ASD, as well as families and the service users themselves working together. This will ensure that the services are needs led, person centred and responsive.
- 4.4 The Falkirk Autism Strategy seeks to bring together the variety of drivers across services such as Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and The Same As You. The common thread is a person centred approach to planning and service delivery, and empowering families and individuals as much as possible
- 4.5 The Strategy adopts the same short, medium and longer term approach to goals, and suggests that the action plan is taken forward by the multi-agency strategy group who have overseen the development of the document. Progress will be reported through the Community Planning Partnership.
- 4.6 Key to the actions in the plan is the desire to develop our work in Falkirk to reflect the Life Journey and progress to a place where support throughout life is sensitive, and where universal services are able to understand and assist and targeted services are available where required.
- 4.7 In early 2013, the Scottish Government undertook a mapping exercise to map what services are available for those affected by ASD in Scotland. It had been hoped that this information would be available prior to the finalisation of local strategies. Unfortunately it was only ready as the Strategy was being finalised but will be key information in taking forward our work locally.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The work in Falkirk began prior to the Scottish Strategy being developed and published. Aspects of that initial work were about looking at how existing funding and services might be more efficiently and effectively provided.
- 5.2 In taking forward the recommendation of the Scottish Strategy, the Scottish Government provided one year funding to all local authorities to develop their local Strategy or take forward the foundations of an existing Strategy. Falkirk Council was given £35,000. This has allowed costs of finalising the Strategy to be covered, and some initial capacity building work to be undertaken as part of the foundation for ongoing work.
- 5.3 In the current climate no additional costs are anticipated as it has been clear from the beginning of this work that the Strategy would be taken forward on a re-design basis and that additional funds for new services were unlikely to be available. However the inclusion of our third sector partners does allow us to be open to any potential funding streams which might enhance the work.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:-

- 6.1 Note the recommendations of the Scottish Strategy for Autism.**
- 6.2 Approve the Falkirk Autism Strategy for submission to the Scottish Government.**
- 6.3 Request the Director of Social Work to provide an update on progress of the Falkirk Autism Strategy as appropriate.**

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Margaret Anderson
Director of Social Work Services
18 October 2013

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Nigel Fletcher
Joint Acting Director of Education
18 October 2013

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Scottish Strategy for Autism Over view