

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children and Young People Select Committee
Date:	17 September 2021
Title:	Update on Autism Services Commissioning for Children and Young People in Hampshire
Report From:	Maternity and Children's Commissioning Team Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight CCG

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Purpose of this Report

1. As requested by the committee in September 2020, this report provides a regular update regarding progress made towards improving Autism services for children and young people in Hampshire, in order to provide assurance to the committee and the communities it represents that access to ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition) assessments and supporting services is improving.

Recommendation

2. For the Children and Young People Select Committee to note the following update.

Background information

3. In 2018 a decision was made by then 5 Hampshire CCGs to transfer a large cohort of children and young people waiting for an ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition) assessment from Hampshire CAMHS to an interim service, in order to clear the backlog.
4. Over the last three years commissioning arrangements for ASC assessments have been characterised by short term blocks of activity, defined, and limited by available funding. This approach has not been able to successfully respond to growing demand and has resulted in increased waiting lists.
5. In November 2020, the following recurrent funding was identified for Hampshire CCG's areas to implement a new pathway, including the procurement of an

assessment service and supporting pre and post diagnostic services. This funding was added to existing funding in place for children and young people living on the Isle of Wight to enable the procurement of a joint and equitable service.

Agreed funding

Part Year Spend 2020/2021	£1.36m
Full Year Spend 2021/2022	£2.1m
Full Year Spend 2022/2023	£2.1m
Full Year Spend 2023/2024	£2.1m
Ongoing (from 2024/2025 onwards)	£1.5m

Progress to Date

6. Interim providers continue to work working at pace to deliver autism assessments, with commissioners monitoring progress on a monthly basis.
7. As of the 31 July 2021, 993 children and young people are waiting to be booked for an Autism assessment across Hampshire, compared to just over 1400 in January 2021. If a child or young person is referred into the current service today, the approximate waiting time will be 10 months from referral to assessment. This is a significant improvement compared with a 35 month waiting time in September 2020. The service reports an overall diagnostic rate of 84.9%.
8. In early 2021, a revised and improved service specification for a new assessment service was agreed. The service specification was built joint with families, clinical experts and relevant professionals across multiple agencies and disciplines. The service specification was then used to commence a formal and competitive procurement process to identity a provider for a long term contract. The procurement concluded in May 2021.
9. The provider of this new assessment service will be Psicon Ltd.
10. Psicon Ltd was established in 1998 and has been commissioned to deliver neurodevelopmental services for children, young people and adults across Hampshire and Isle of Wight since 2016.
11. Psicon Ltd offers a flexible service for families which includes weekend and evening appointments through face to face and online formats, depending on the needs and preference of patients. The provider has a very successful and proven track record of providing good quality services for families.
12. The new service will start on October 1st 2021 for 2.5 years until 31st March 2024. The service is predicted to meet national waiting time standards by the end of the new contract. Commissioners acknowledge that this pace of assessment delivery is slower than ideal. However, by investing into the

improvement of pre-diagnostic support services, we anticipate that referrals will reduce/be staggered over time and subsequently further reduce the number of assessments required which will ensure that waiting times do not increase.

13. Key improvements and changes agreed for the new service:

- Expanded age range of 3 years old (originally 5 years) to 18 years (19 years with a learning disability).
- Ability to offer follow-up session post assessment.
- Provide an accessible and flexible NICE Compliant service which supports patient choice, family life and offers a range of assessment formats including face to face, online and hybrid models.
- Offer a follow up session with families post assessment, to go through the report and signpost onto helpful local services, both internal and external to the NHS. If a diagnosis is not reached, findings will still be shared with the family via a follow up session offer.
- Provide a local service, with established local links which ensures joint working with other agencies and services, including clear specific and meaningful signposting to the child and family.
- Ensure that children and their parent/carers are involved in each step of the pathway.
- Continue to work with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Commissioners to develop services for Autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions.

Other areas of Progress

14. The Hampshire County Council Primary Behaviour Service has been commissioned since late 2020 to deliver the Children's Wellbeing Support Service. Referrals remain high.
15. The service is designed to offer early intervention and support service for parents of children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs as well as Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attachment Disorder, anxiety and poor emotional wellbeing.
16. Families identified as having difficulties such as the above can be referred to the Wellbeing Support Service who will work with parents to identify needs and recommend onward support where appropriate. By providing early, targeted support through a child-centred approach, the service aims to:
- Support parent(s) to enable children to self-manage and maintain good emotional wellbeing
 - Reduce inappropriate diagnosis
 - Support parent(s) to enable children to get the most from their education
 - Promote a healthy home environment and improve family dynamics
 - Promote inclusion in schools
17. A dedicated team of experienced practitioners provide the following services and support for children living in Hampshire:

- Support parents to evaluate their child's needs, behaviour and emotional wellbeing
 - Support for parents/carers, including help with developing a positive home/school relationship, as well as direct work with parents/carers
 - Support families regarding crisis management and conflict resolution
 - Support parents to learn strategies that work for them, so that they can enable their child to self-regulate their behaviour
 - Support families to develop their strengths, emotional resilience and independence
 - Support families to become better engaged with their child's learning and enable them to access more of the curriculum
 - As neurodevelopmental pathways continue to improve the service will become one of the first points of contact providing an early intervention service.
18. The service is complimentary and available for families with children from Year R to Year 7 through a referral from a health professional. It acts as the first point of the ASC pathway to help reduce unnecessary referrals for assessment by first trying early intervention strategies as mentioned above.
19. Demand for this service has been increasing month on month, creating waiting lists given current staff capacity. These however are well below NHS national standards but will continue to be monitored.
20. Initial and ongoing feedback received from families has been extremely positive, examples below:
- *"Thank you so much for your quick response, you could not have been any better. It has really made such a positive difference for this family. Thank you."*
 - *"Thank you so much. I feel like we are finally getting somewhere now, I have tried to get help for her since she was about 5 and didn't really get anywhere"*
 - *"thank you for listening and understanding – you are the first person to listen to my needs"*
 - *"We will see if these changes make a big enough impact, as well as using strategies that you have suggested, before making a CAMHS referral"*
 - *"Because of the support I had, I have been able to deal with my child calmer and this has reflected in his actions being more positive"*
 - *"X is increasingly better able to understand his emotions. We are seeing fewer tantrums and longer periods of calm. This reduces stress on the whole family"*
21. Commissioners are working in partnership with Hampshire County Council to confirm the long term future of this service.
22. Autism Hampshire has been commissioned up until 31st March 2022 as a pilot to deliver parent support workshops, and school staff training focusing on

supporting children and young people with traits of autism. Commissioners are now working to consider long term arrangements and review the effectiveness of this service.

23. Feedback for Autism Hampshire is also overwhelmingly positive:

- *“I have learnt so much and taken away lots of the approaches and implemented them in class, I would love for other teaching staff to have the opportunity to come to a course, I have learnt more from this training than any other.”*
- *“I’ve been telling everyone at school about the course. I need to go through all of my notes as there was so much information and it’s all relevant. Thankyou”*
- *“The content of this course was really engaging and helped me to realise and develop the skills I will need to be able to be fully equipped and efficient at my role. The course was really informative and had given me life-long skills and continuous development strategies to aid me in any future progression in roles supporting children and adults with autism”*

24. A re-procurement of Hampshire Therapy (Speech and Language, Occupational Health etc.) services is currently underway. Feedback from Hampshire families with children presenting with traits of Autism, has indicated a gap in the current therapies service regarding sensory support. The Therapies Project team has included this feedback into the service specification and quality workstream to ensure sensory support is included and funded appropriately within the new service.

25. Multi-disciplinary/Agency ‘Filtering’ Panels will be established to review all referrals requesting autism Assessments and agree on the most appropriate intervention to ensure support is offered at the earliest point possible.

26. Commissioners will continue to explore opportunities to embed further multi-disciplinary, pre and post assessment support for children and young people presenting with traits of Autism. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight ASC Transformation Group, attended by system wide partners and families will monitor the effectiveness of the current services as well as assessment waiting times and report progress to the Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight CCG Complex Care and Autism Board.

Consultation and Equalities

27. An equality/quality impact assessment has been developed and is under review by the by the CCG Quality team.

Conclusions

28. Although significant progress has been made to date, commissioners will continue to provide regular updates at each select committee meeting until committee members are fully reassured.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:
Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Children and Families Act [Part 3 SEND] 2014 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted	September 2014 January 2015
Statutory Guidance: SEND Code of Practice 0-25 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf	
Local area SEND inspection framework (Ofsted and CQC) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-sendinspection-framework	April 2016

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

This report is an information update for the Children and Young People Select Committee and therefore no impact has been identified.