

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children and Young People Select Committee
Date:	12 July 2022
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. The purpose of this report is to provide a regular update as requested by the committee in September 2020, 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(s)

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

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to provide assurance to the committee on the progress being made on Autism services for children and young people in Hampshire, outstanding issues to solve and the next steps for the project to ensure further success.
4. The CCG DCO team was requested to provide a regular update to the select committee following the September 2020 committee.
5. Since then, significant financial investment was identified and secured which enabled a full procurement of a new assessment service to take place and additional support offers for children, young people and their families. Performance of Autism services since September 2020 has been positive, most notably a significant reduction in the waiting lists for Autism assessments.

Further work to monitor the performance and effectiveness of the services commissioned is ongoing, as well as working to ensure long-term supporting services.

Contextual information

6. In 2018 a decision was made by the 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.
7. Since then, 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.
8. In November 2020, 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 recurrent 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

In early 2021, a revised and improved service specification for a new assessment service was jointly designed 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 identify a provider for a long-term contract. The provider of this new assessment service is Psicon Ltd who have been commissioned via interim contracts since 2018. The new service went live in October 2021 and the contract expires on the 31st March 2024.

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. The provider offers a flexible service for families which includes weekend and evening appointments through face-to-face venues (Hampshire libraries) 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, accessible services for families.

9. The service was predicted to meet national waiting time standards by the end of the new contract. However, based on current predictions due to the

substantial increase in referrals (please see point 27 for further information), the provider is reporting that waiting times are unlikely to be reduced to national standards by the end of the contract.

Commissioners acknowledge that this is less than positive news and are working with the provider and other agencies to endeavour to reduce waiting times going forward. Commissioners are still committed to improving and enhancing pre-diagnostic support services to reduce the reliance on diagnosis to improve waiting times. Further work being undertaken is expanded on throughout this report.

10. Key improvements and changes 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.
- A streamlined referral pathway which allows professionals to refer directly onto the Autism Pathway without first being received by Hampshire CAMHS.

Referrals can also now be received from education and social care professionals, who often are able to submit more robust referrals due to their potentially more frequent contact with the child or young person.

11. The DCO team has been working in partnership with Hampshire County Council, specifically the Primary Behaviour Service and agreed a joint commissioning arrangement with the service which created the Children's Wellbeing Support Service since late 2020.

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.

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

The service is freely 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.

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”*
- *“We seem to be on an even keel and managing well now as a result of the support!”*

12. Commissioners have worked in partnership with Hampshire County Council to ensure the long-term future of this service and agreed a new 3-year contract up until 31 March 2025. This agreement includes an expansion to a 44 week a year service (up from 40 weeks) and an increase in funding in line with the costs associated with running the service. This new extended service started in April 2022 and commissioners will work with Hampshire County Council to assess the impact in the early stages of the new contract.

13. Autism Hampshire has been re-commissioned for another year up until 31st March 2023 as a pilot to deliver parent support workshops, and school (primary or secondary) staff training focusing on supporting children and young people with traits of autism. Commissioners will work to consider longer term arrangements and review the effectiveness of this service.

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”*
- *“Thank you X you have brought this difficult subject to life and changed so much in the way we think about our son and those who are around him. We have been able to use this knowledge to support him at school and at home already, and this only the beginning. I wish all schools would have this level of understanding when working with any child. The information in this workshop is so helpful and relevant for those with and without Autism. It has honestly changed our lives.”*

14. A routine suite of advice and support for children, young people and their families across the age range is available including: Hampshire Educational Psychology; Autism Hampshire Workshops; The Hampshire CAMHS website (for information and resources); HPCN “Futures in Mind” Programme & Barnardo’s Family Support.

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

A new senior transformation manager has been recruited who will be leading on continuing the review and potential procurement of a new service.

Finance

16. 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.

17. 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 across both Hampshire and the Island.

Agreed funding

Part Year Spend 2020/2021	£1.36m
Full Year Spend 2021/2022	£2.1m
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Performance

18. As of 31st May 2022, 1,475 children and young people are waiting to be booked for an Autism assessment across Hampshire. This is up from 1,288 reported on the last select committee report. However, it is important to note that at the time of first reports to the committee, over, 1,700 children and young people were waiting to be booked for an Autism assessment in Hampshire.
If a child or young person is referred into the current service today, the approximate waiting time will be between 10 months to a year from referral to assessment. This is a significant improvement compared with the projected 35 month waiting time in September 2020. The service reports an overall diagnostic rate of 82.6%.
19. For the financial year 22/23, Psicon are expected to deliver approximately 1526 assessments illustrating their commitment to working at pace.
20. To help assist with further reductions in waiting lists and waiting times, and to also alleviate pressures due to increasing referrals (please see point 27 for further details), further funding has been awarded to Psicon as a waiting list initiative. This will result in approximately 350 additional assessments in the next financial year, including 64 assessments specifically for North East Hampshire.
21. Providers have assured commissioners that young people coming towards their 18th birthdays are prioritised for assessment in order to ensure that they do not have to be transferred to another waiting list through the adult Autism pathway.
Looked after children and children from military families are also prioritised for assessment as well as those admitted to hospital due to crisis or distress.
22. The service reports that 64% of referrals are for children and young people who identify as male, and 36% of referrals identify as female. Less than 1% identify as not male or female.
23. Work is ongoing to implement the NHS England Autism in schools project on the Isle of Wight, Southampton and Portsmouth for both primary and secondary mainstream/special schools. The three elements of the project are:
 - Building relationships and networks of support
 - Learning opportunities for schools and parent carer forums
 - Autism self-awareness and skills development, hearing the voice of young people

Commissioners will apply outcomes from the evaluation of the project and associated learning in these areas when possible. Year 2 funding for the project is currently being discussed, future plans are to be confirmed.

24. Hampshire was successful in an NHS England bid for funding to enhance peer support networks. This funding has been allocated to Parent/Carer Forums to enhance their current offer, to include place-based peer support, system advice, navigation of the SEND Local Offer, pathway guidance and information regarding Autism; to families living in Hampshire.

This project went live in April and has begun helping families access services and provide support.

Networks will expand their reach to include seldom heard groups, sharing learning and best practice with each other. Evaluation of the impact from the project will begin during this financial year.

25. Commissioners have recognised the significant increased pressure on the Barnardo's Specialist parenting support service for ASC and ADHD and have provided additional one-off funding to respond to a peak in demand across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (which were partly caused by the increased investment into assessments) and reduce waiting times, allowing the service to continue to help parents of children with ASC and ADHD and meet the demand and need of the children and young people. A service review is currently underway with a Hampshire and Isle of Wight procurement planned within the next 12 months.
A draft service specification for a new service as part of the procurement has been developed and is now being tweaked based on feedback from important stakeholders.

Consultation and Equalities

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

Other Key Issues

27. Commissioners have been made aware from Psicon, the assessment provider, that referrals have been increasing in recent months, which has pushed the average referral rate of approximately 100 per month at the beginning of the contract, now up to over 150 per month on average. As per point 20, additional one-off funding has been awarded in part to help with this increase in referrals.
It is hoped that the new streamlined pathway will mean referrals are more staggered and will reduce referrals being received by the provider in large batches. This will continue to be monitored and reviewed.

To help assist with expanding capacity, a framework has been designed for

Autism assessments which allows contracting authorities to award contracts for additional capacity to help reduce waiting times. This is fully compliant with procurement legislation which previously has been a limiting factor on adding additional capacity to services.

Evaluation of providers who have 'bid' to be part of this framework is currently underway.

28. There are still ongoing issues around the perception of diagnosis being the 'golden ticket' to access services and support. For example, many parents still have the misconception that a diagnosis of Autism is required for an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).
The DCO team's participation in engagement events such as Hampshire Parent Carer Networks "Meet the SEN Team" meetings are being utilised to dispel myths surrounding access to services and build confidence in the support services available across Hampshire.
29. There are still reports of a wide variance in the inclusiveness of education settings within Hampshire. Ongoing work to ensure all education settings are providing an inclusive environment within the school environment for children with neurodiverse traits. Learning from the Isle of Wight Autism in schools project and also the Autism Hampshire school training are expected to help reduce the number of settings with issues around inclusivity.

Next Steps

30. Commissioners have begun robust monitoring of the assessment service, with the key focus on waiting times delivered by the provider. Monthly contract review meetings are conducted to monitor activity and performance, with quarterly quality focused meetings.
31. Multi-disciplinary/Agency 'Triage' Panels will be established across Hampshire with the aim to review all referrals requesting autism Assessments and agree on the most appropriate intervention to ensure support is offered at the earliest point possible. This is hoped to stagger and/or reduce referral rates for Autism assessment but still provide appropriate support and interventions.
The Isle of Wight referral panel started in December 2021. The panel which is attended by a range of specialists runs every 2 weeks and currently triages 50 referrals per month. This panel has now been running for 5 months and is seeing a significant reduction in referrals for Autism Assessments with the majority of referrals being sign posted onto intervention services such as occupational therapy, the wellbeing service and other support services. This reduction in assessment referrals will allow the provider to further reduce the waiting list whilst children and young people access the support they need according to clinical evidence submitted.

Commissioners are now working to introduce this panel across Hampshire, with a pilot to be embedded in North East Hampshire.

Discussions with potential members in North East Hampshire have taken place, with feedback taken on board in creating an effective panel.

Estimated start date for North East Hampshire panel is currently September 2022.

32. Commissioners will continue to explore opportunities to embed further multi-disciplinary panels and 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.
33. Commissioners are working with Portsmouth colleagues and commissioners to understand their "ND Pathway" to ensure that there is equity across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICS.

Conclusions

34. Although significant progress has been made to date, commissioners will continue to provide regular updates at Select Committee meetings 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

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
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	January 2015
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	
<p>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.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
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:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- (a) *why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- (b) *will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*